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TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 4027.

CHASTELARD AND MARY STUART.

BY
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

IN ONE VOLUME.

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

By the same Author,

ATALANTA IN CALYDON, AND LYRICAL POEMS 1 vol.
LOVE'S CROSS-CURRENTS 1 vol.

CHASTELARD
AND
MARY STUART

TWO TRAGEDIES

BY
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE
AUTHOR OF "ATALANTA IN CALYDON," ETC.

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LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1908.

Au milieu de l'avril, entre les lys naquit
Son corps, qui de blancheur les lys mêmes vainquit;
Et les roses, qui sont du sang d'Adonis teintes,
Furent par sa couleur de leur vermeil dépeintes.

Ronsard.

What need ye hech ! and how ! ladies?
What need ye how ! for me ?
Ye never saw grace at a graceless face ;
Queen Mary has nane to gie.

The Queen's Marie.

I DEDICATE THIS PLAY,
AS A PARTIAL EXPRESSION OF REVERENCE
AND GRATITUDE,

TO THE CHIEF OF LIVING POETS;
TO THE FIRST DRAMATIST OF HIS AGE;
TO THE GREATEST EXILE, AND THEREFORE
TO THE GREATEST MAN OF FRANCE;

TO

VICTOR HUGO.

CHASTELARD AND MARY STUART.

THE readers of "Atalanta in Calydon: and Lyrical Poems," by Mr. Swinburne, published some years ago in this series, have been long asking for a companion volume containing specimens of the poet's work of a more purely dramatic kind.

In order to explain the place given to this poet by English critics as an inventor of harmonies, it seems necessary to say a word or two upon the subject of English metres generally. It would be no exaggeration to affirm that in the 18th century one or two poets only ventured upon any metrical excursions outside the metres which custom had clothed with authority—authority so great that those metres were almost held to be sacred by the critic. And among the poets themselves it seems to have been an axiom, save by Collins and Gray, that to invent any more English metres was next to an impossibility.

And even in the century that followed, until Coleridge's unpublished "Christabel" fragment inspired Scott and then Byron to write in irregular octosyllabics,

it was almost always in the old metres that the "Georgian poets" wrote. With regard to Shelley, "The Skylark," and other lyrics do undoubtedly show a fine metrical invention. Again in the "Ode to the West Wind," by breaking up into fourteen-line stanzas the *terza rima* of Dante, and thereby altering its character entirely, Mr. Swinburne's metrical invention is equally made manifest. Still, it was in the old accredited and much laboured forms that such masterpieces as "Epipsychidion," and "The Revolt of Islam" were written. Of Keats again it must be said that, structurally considered, his superb odes are in the simplest variations in iambic ten-syllable lines of the old metres. Indeed, among all the group who inaugurated that great "Renascence of Wonder" which I have discussed in the introduction to "Aylwin," it was Coleridge alone who in the evolution of the new Romantic impulse showed great metrical invention.

Then arose Tennyson. One of this great master's early triumphs was considered to be that he could invent metres. And a few metres he undoubtedly did invent, working in them admirably, though perhaps not quite so admirably as he worked in the orthodox measures of his predecessors. In the lilting alexandrines of "Maud," there is much fine invention. Nevertheless, his peculiar strength among the poets of the "Renascence of Wonder" lay principally in richness of colour, in warmth of emotion and in depth of thought expressed

in the old forms. Rossetti in "The Burden of Nineveh" and a few other poems invented metres, and good ones. Morris invented none. Browning could and did invent metres, such as they were, but no one thinks of Browning in connection with metrical music at all except in one or two notable instances, such as "A Last Ride Together."

Then there leapt upon the world a man who in "Atalanta" and "Poems and Ballads," and the poems that followed, invented more metres than all his contemporaries—nay more than all the other poets in the language put together, from Chaucer down to his own day—a man of whom it may be said that he rarely writes a poem without inventing for it a new metre—a metre that is more melodious than could be invented by any other English poet.

And now as to the two plays given in this volume. With regard to these the difference between them and "Atalanta in Calydon" is so fundamental that it need not be touched upon here. "Chastelard," it will be remembered, is the first and "Mary Stuart" is the third part of a trilogy on the subject of Mary Queen of Scots, and between the two intervenes the second part, "Bothwell." "Chastelard" though published after "Atalanta in Calydon," in 1865, was written before that drama, while "Mary Stuart" did not appear till 1881. There is not

room here to discuss the blank verse of the trilogy in its various parts. But, briefly, it may be said that the finest in dramatic movement is contained in "Bothwell," notably in the scene depicting the death of Darnley.

It is a pity that "Bothwell" cannot possibly be touched upon here. And even concerning "Chastelard" and "Mary Stuart" only a very little can be said. The plays must for the most part be left to speak for themselves. And most eloquently they will speak to all who have the power of appreciating English poetry. A few words, however, seem to be demanded. First as to "Chastelard" and its magnificent conclusion. It is difficult to recall any play that ends more grandly than this. It is true, no doubt, that the situation in which a striking dramatic action is painted through the description of a spectator to one who, though present, is prevented from looking on, is a very old one in imaginative literature, as old as the story of Ægeus in classical legend, as old in modern legend as the famous scene in the story of *Bluebeard* where Sister Anne from the battlements describes to her sister in peril the people approaching to succour them—as old as the scene in the French and Slavic versions of the legend of Tristan where the dying hero awaiting the signal of the white sail upon the ocean announcing that Iseult was on board the ship which had been sent for her, plies his treacherous nurse with questions as to what coloured

sail is to be seen approaching on the horizon, and is killed by being told that the sail is a black one, notifying her absence, whereas it was really a white one notifying her presence.

But these are perhaps all surpassed in the final scene in "Chastelard" where Mary Carmichael describes to Mary Beaton Chastelard's execution. The same effect has been admirably used by Scott in "Ivanhoe" where Rebecca describes from the windows the storming of Front-de-Bœuf's castle to the wounded knight who is unable to see it for himself. And more recently, it has been admirably used by Rossetti in the scene of "Sister Helen" where the answers of the "little brother" to the sister's questions flash upon the reader the terrible pictures of the scared kindred of her doomed lover riding through the night to implore her mercy upon the man her witchcraft is killing. Even that marvellous picture is surpassed by the *dénouement* of "Chastelard." Moreover it has the structural value of pointing to the peripetia of the whole trilogy, and knitting the three plays indissolubly into one artistic whole.

With regard to the feeling of doom which overshadows the entire trilogy, it is rather of "Karma" (which I have defined to be the mysterious power for punishment inherent in man's own evil deeds) than that of the Destiny of the Greeks, (in which the mischievous power of the gods is mixed up with the

workings of "Karma,") that fills the dramatic atmosphere. It was the man whom Mary Beaton passionately loved whose blood was so selfishly shed by the Queen; and the handmaiden's last words to her mistress are,

"But I will never leave you till I die."

And she never does leave her till her bitter vengeance helps to bring about at the end of the trilogy the doom she has predicted.

Throughout the entire trilogy the Queen of Scots remains true to herself in all her virtues which are few and in all her vices which are many. These are thus summed up by the poet:

"Nor shall men ever say
But she was born right royal; full of sins,
It may be, and by circumstance or choice
Dyed and defaced with bloody stains and black,
Unmerciful, unfaithful, but of heart
So fiery high, so swift of spirit and clear,
In extreme danger and pain so lifted up,
So of all violent things inviolable,
So large of courage, so superb of soul,
So sheathed with iron mind invincible
And arms unbreached of fireproof constancy —
By shame not shaken, fear or force or death,
Change, or all confluence of calamities—
And so at her worst need beloved, and still,
Naked of help and honour when she seemed,
As other women would be, and of hope
Stripped, still so of herself adorable
By minds not always all ignobly mad
Nor all made poisonous with false grain of faith,

She shall be a world's wonder to all time,
 A deadly glory watched of marvelling men
 Not without praise, not without noble tears,
 And if without what she would never have
 Who had it never, pity—yet from none
 Quite without reverence and some kind of love
 For that which was so royal.”

It will be found by German readers of these dramas that they exemplify in a very striking degree the difference between the conditions of the German and those of the English stage. It is true that in the drama of most countries flexibility has long been vanishing. But it is only in England that it is lost altogether. In the drama of all countries, the demands of illusion—of a common-place *απάτη*—increase year by year, but it is, I repeat, in England only that the demarcation between plays written for the study and plays written for the stage has become completely accentuated. In England, indeed, they have become two essentially different forms of art, as I have pointed out in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

That no one at present has written anything like adequately upon the severance between the acted drama and that kind of dramatic poetry which in our time differentiates English drama from that of France and other continental countries, is not a little curious. The growth of realism in art is a necessary and inevitable result of that complexity : that searching knowl-
 ness of temper which belong to a social arrangement

like that of modern times. In the drama especially the demand of spectators for further and further material illusion has at last in England made it necessary that every speech shall not only be informed with dramatic life, but shall have a theatric *raison d'être*—almost even a spectacular one—that every response, in short, shall be struck from the dramatic action, and pass as swiftly as a spark from an anvil. But these two plays show that another form of drama in modern times has been invented, the “study play,” or unacted drama. This form seems to be the only kind of poetic art still remaining in which the poet is able to develop in a pure poetic structure his conception of a subtle or a complex character, as he would in the time of Shakespeare have developed it in an acting play. This kind of drama does not pretend to heed theatric conditions, for it is written to be read and not to be acted. Yet it is developed in a certain accordance, howsoever loose, with the structural laws of theatric representation. But what concerns us in studying these two plays is the fact that when the dramatist has determined to produce a drama, not for the boards, but for the study, there arises before him the important question how far a poet may legitimately free himself from those theatric conditions which, being incidents of the modern type of acted drama, are really incidents of a form of art different from that which he is attempting; for it must be borne

in mind that the points which aid illusion in the contemporary theatre tend not to aid but to destroy illusion in the study. Take, for instance, such a drama as the first Lord Lytton's "Lady of Lyons," on the one hand and take "Philip Van Artevelde," or Mr. Swinburne's "Bothwell," or the two plays contained in this volume on the other. In the first case so skilfully is the dialogue elicited by the theatric situations that its falsity to nature is forgotten by the spectator; while in the other three plays dialogue which is so true to nature and to the actual facts of history as to produce when read something of the illusion of a contemporary chronicle is so little supported by theatric conditions that "Philip Van Artevelde," even after much pruning, does not act well, "Bothwell" could never be acted at all, and "Mary Stuart" could only be acted by even more pruning and recasting than were necessary in "Philip Van Artevelde." As to "Bothwell" a single act of twenty-one scenes and a speech of several hundred verses as we get in the play, have been called monstrous, and, indeed, would be monstrous in a tragedy written on the theatric lines. Yet it is, perhaps, a mere question of names after all. Had these plays been called simply "dramatic Chronicles," the reply to objectors to their great length and defective construction would be by a question, "What, then, is the proper construction and what is the proper length of a dramatic chronicle?" Clearly, therefore, there is a very great free-

dom of construction allowed to the writer of a modern "study play." Yet the laws of imaginative art are here not less inexorable than they are in an acted drama, but more so. The more entirely free is the "study play" from the conditions of theatrical illusion, the less free is it to dispense with poetic illusion, *i.e.* with that dramatic truth which the spectacular realism of the modern theatre can alone cause us to dispense with and forget.

Interesting as is the question raised above, it is impossible, of course, to do more than glance at it here. That it should have been ignored by so many English critics of Mr. Swinburne's dramas is very remarkable.

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON.

THE PINES, PUTNEY HILL,
LONDON, SW.

CHASTELARD.

PERSONS.

MARY STUART.

MARY BEATON.

MARY SEYTON.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

MARY HAMILTON.

PIERRE DE BOSCOSEL DE CHASTELARD.

DARNLEY.

MURRAY.

RANDOLPH.

MORTON.

LINDSAY.

FATHER BLACK.

Guards, Burgesses, a Preacher, Citizens, &c.

Another Yle is there toward the Northe, in the See Ocean, where that ben fulle cruele and ful evele Wommen of Nature: and thei han precious Stones in hire Eyen; and thei ben of that kynde, that zif they beholden ony man, thei slen him anon with the beholdyng, as dothe the Basilisk.

MAUNDEVILE'S *Voiage and Travaile*, Ch. xxviii.

ACT I.
MARY BEATON.

SCENE I.—*The Upper Chamber in Holyrood.*

The four MARIES.

MARY BEATON (*sings*):—

1.

*Le navire
Est à l'eau;
Entends rire
Ce gros flot
Que fait luire
Et bruire
Le vieux sire
Aquila.*

2.

*Dans l'espace
Du grand air
Le vent passe
Comme un fer;
Siffle et sonne,
Tombe et tonne,
Prend et donne
A la mer,*

3.

*Vois, la brise
Tourne au nord,
Et la bise
Souffle et mord
Sur ta pure
Chevelure
Qui murmure
Et se tord.*

MARY HAMILTON. You never sing now but it makes
you sad;
Why do you sing?

MARY BEATON. I hardly know well why;
It makes me sad to sing, and very sad
To hold my peace.

MARY CARMICHAEL. I know what saddens you.

MARY BEATON. Prithee, what? what?

MARY CARMICHAEL. Why, since we came from
France,

You have no lover to make stuff for songs.

MARY BEATON. You are wise; for there my pain
begins indeed,
Because I have no lovers out of France.

MARY SEYTON. I mind me of one Olivier de Pesme,
(You knew him, sweet) a pale man with short hair,
Wore tied at sleeve the Beaton colour.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Blue—
I know, blue scarfs. I never liked that knight.

MARY HAMILTON. Me? I know him? I hardly
knew his name.
Black, was his hair? no, brown.

MARY SEYTON. Light pleases you:
I have seen the time brown served you well enough.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Lord Darnley's is a mere maid's
yellow.

MARY HAMILTON. No;
A man's, good colour.

MARY SEYTON. Ah, does that burn your blood?
Why, what a bitter colour is this red
That fills your face! if you be not in love,
I am no maiden.

MARY HAMILTON. Nay, God help true hearts!
I must be stabbed with love then, to the bone,
Yea to the spirit, past cure.

MARY SEYTON. What were you saying?
I see some jest run up and down your lips.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Finish your song; I know you
have more of it;
Good sweet, I pray you do.

MARY BEATON. I am too sad.

MARY CARMICHAEL. This will not sadden you to
sing; your song
Tastes sharp of sea and the sea's bitterness,
But small pain sticks on it.

MARY BEATON. Nay, it is sad;
For either sorrow with the beaten lips
Sings not at all, or if it does get breath
Sings quick and sharp like a hard sort of mirth:
And so this song does; or I would it did,
That it might please me better than it does.

MARY SEYTON. Well, as you choose then. What a
sort of men
Crowd all about the squares!

MARY CARMICHAEL. Aye, hateful men;
For look how many talking mouths be there,
So many angers show their teeth at us.
Which one is that, stooped somewhat in the neck,
That walks so with his chin against the wind,
Lips sideways shut? a keen-faced man—lo there,
He that walks midmost.

MARY SEYTON. That is Master Knox.
He carries all these folk within his skin,
Bound up as 'twere between the brows of him
Like a bad thought; their hearts beat inside his;
They gather at his lips like flies in the sun,
Thrust sides to catch his face.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Look forth; so—push
The window—further—see you anything?

MARY HAMILTON. They are well gone; but pull the
 lattice in,
The wind is like a blade aslant. Would God
I could get back one day I think upon;
The day we four and some six after us
Sat in that Louvre garden and plucked fruits
To cast love-lots with in the gathered grapes;
This way; you shut your eyes and reach and pluck,
And catch a lover for each grape you get.
I got but one, a green one, and it broke
Between my fingers and it ran down through them.

MARY SEYTON. Aye, and the queen fell in a little
 wrath
Because she got so many, and tore off
Some of them she had plucked unwittingly—
She said, against her will. What fell to you?

MARY BEATON. Me? nothing but the stalk of a
stripped bunch

With clammy grape-juice leavings at the tip.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Aye, true, the queen came first
and she won all;

It was her bunch we took to cheat you with.

What, will you weep for that now? for you seem

As one that means to weep. God pardon me!

I think your throat is choking up with tears.

You are not well, sweet, for a lying jest

To shake you thus much.

MARY BEATON.

I am well enough:

Give not your pity trouble for my sake.

MARY SEYTON. If you be well sing out your song
and laugh,

Though it were but to fret the fellows there.—

Now shall we catch her secret washed and wet

In the middle of her song; for she must weep

If she sing through.

MARY HAMILTON.

I told you it was love;

I watched her eyes all through the masquing time

Feed on his face by morsels; she must weep.

MARY BEATON.

4.

Le navire

Passe et luit,

Puis chavire

A grand bruit;

Et sur l'onde

La plus blonde

Tête au monde

Flotte et fuit.

5.

*Moi, je rame,
Et l'amour,
C'est ma flamme,
Mon grand jour,
Ma chandelle
Blanche et belle,
Ma chapelle
De séjour.*

6.

*Toi, mon âme
Et ma foi,
Sois ma dame
Et ma loi;
Sois ma mie,
Sois Marie,
Sois ma vie,
Toute à moi!*

MARY SEYTON. I know the song; a song of Chastelard's

He made in coming over with the queen.
How hard it rained! he played that over twice
Sitting before her, singing each word soft,
As if he loved the least she listened to.

MARY HAMILTON. No marvel if he loved it for her sake;

She is the choice of women in the world,
Is she not, sweet?

MARY BEATON. I have seen no fairer one.

MARY SEYTON. And the most loving: did you note
last night

How long she held him with her hands and eyes,
Looking a little sadly, and at last
Kissed him below the chin and parted so
As the dance ended?

MARY HAMILTON. This was courtesy;
So might I kiss my singing-bird's red bill
After some song, till he bit short my lip.

MARY SEYTON. But if a lady hold her bird anights
To sing to her between her fingers—ha?
I have seen such birds.

MARY CARMICHAEL. O, you talk emptily;
She is full of grace; and marriage in good time
Will wash the fool called scandal off men's lips.

MARY HAMILTON. I know not that; I know how
folk would gibe
If one of us pushed courtesy so far.
She has always loved love's fashions well; you wot,
The marshal, head friend of this Chastelard's,
She used to talk with ere he brought her here
And sow their talk with little kisses thick
As roses in rose-harvest. For myself,
I cannot see which side of her that lurks
Which snares in such wise all the sense of men;
What special beauty, subtle as man's eye
And tender as the inside of the eyelid is,
There grows about her.

MARY CARMICHAEL. I think her cunning speech—
The soft and rapid shudder of her breath
In talking—the rare tender little laugh—
The pitiful sweet sound like a bird's sigh
When her voice breaks; her talking does it all.

MARY SEYTON. I say, her eyes with those clear perfect brows:

It is the playing of those eyelashes,
The lure of amorous looks as sad as love,
Plucks all souls toward her like a net.

MARY HAMILTON.

What, what!

You praise her in too lover-like a wise
For women that praise women; such report
Is like robes worn the rough side next the skin,
Frets where it warms.

MARY SEYTON. You think too much in French.

Enter DARNLEY. Here comes your thorn; what glove
against it now?

MARY HAMILTON. O, God's good pity! this a thorn
of mine?

It has not run deep in yet.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

I am not sure:

The red runs over to your face's edge.

DARNLEY. Give me one word; nay, lady, for love's
sake;

Here, come this way; I will not keep you; no.

—O my sweet soul, why do you wrong me thus?

MARY HAMILTON. Why will you give me for men's
eyes to burn?

DARNLEY. What, sweet, I love you as mine own
soul loves me;

They shall divide when we do.

MARY HAMILTON.

I cannot say.

DARNLEY. Why, look you, I am broken with the
queen;

This is the rancour and the bitter heart

That grows in you; by God it is nought else.

Why, this last night she held me for a fool—
Aye, God wot, for a thing of stripe and bell.
I bade her make me marshal in her masque—
I had the dress here painted, gold and grey
(That is, not grey but a blue-green like this)—
She tells me she had chosen her marshal, she,
The best o' the world for cunning and sweet wit;
And what sweet fool but her sweet knight, God help!
To serve her with that three-inch wit of his?
She is all fool and fiddling now; for me,
I am well pleased; God knows, if I might choose
I would not be more troubled with her love.
Her love is like a briar that rasps the flesh,
And yours is soft like flowers. Come this way, love;
So, further in this window; hark you here.

Enter CHASTELARD.

MARY BEATON. Good morrow, sir.

CHASTELARD. Good morrow, noble lady.

MARY CARMICHAEL. You have heard no news? what news?

CHASTELARD. Nay, I have none.

That maiden-tongued male-faced Elizabeth
Hath eyes unlike our queen's, hair not so soft,
And hands more sudden save for courtesy;
And lips no kiss of love's could bring to flower
In such red wise as our queen's; save this news,
I know none English.

MARY SEYTON. Come, no news of her;
For God's love talk still rather of our queen.

MARY BEATON. God give us grace then to speak
well of her.
You did right joyfully in our masque last night;

I saw you when the queen lost breath (her head
Bent back, her chin and lips catching the air—
A goodly thing to see her) how you smiled
Across her head, between your lips—no doubt
You had great joy, sir. Did not you take note
Once how one lock fell? that was good to see.

CHASTELARD. Yea, good enough to live for.

MARY BEATON. Nay, but sweet
Enough to die. When she broke off the dance,
Turning round short and soft—I never saw
Such supple ways of walking as she has.

CHASTELARD. Why do you praise her gracious looks
to me?

MARY BEATON. Sir, for mere sport; but tell me even
for love
How much you love her.

CHASTELARD. I know not: it may be
If I had set mine eyes to find that out,
I should not know it. She hath fair eyes: may be
I love her for sweet eyes or brows or hair,
For the smooth temples, where God touching her
Made blue with sweeter veins the flower-sweet white;
Or for the tender turning of her wrist,
Or marriage of the eyelid with the cheek;
I cannot tell; or flush of lifting throat,
I know not if the colour get a name
This side of heaven—no man knows; or her mouth,
A flower's lip with a snake's lip, stinging sweet,
And sweet to sting with: face that one would see
And then fall blind and die with sight of it
Held fast between the eyelids—oh, all these
And all her body and the soul to that,

The speech and shape and hand and foot and heart
That I would die of—yea, her name that turns
My face to fire being written—I know no whit
How much I love them.

MARY BEATON. Nor how she loves you back?

CHASTELARD. I know her ways of loving, all of them:
A sweet soft way the first is; afterward
It burns and bites like fire; the end of that,
Charred dust, and eyelids bitten through with smoke.

MARY BEATON. What has she done for you to gird
at her?

CHASTELARD. Nothing. You do not greatly love her,
you,
Who do not—gird, you call it. I am bound to France;
Shall I take word from you to anyone?
So it be harmless, not a gird, I will.

MARY BEATON. I doubt you will not go hence with
your life.

CHASTELARD. Why, who should slay me? no man
northwards born,
In my poor mind; my sword's lip is no maid's
To fear the iron biting of their own,
Though they kiss hard for hate's sake.

MARY BEATON. Lo you, sir,
How sharp he whispers, what close breath and eyes—
And hers are fast upon him. do you see?

CHASTELARD. Well, which of these must take my
life in hand?
Pray God it be the better: nay, which hand?

MARY BEATON. I think, none such. The man is
goodly made;
She is tender-hearted toward his courtesies,

And would not have them fall too low to find.
Look, they slip forth.

[*Exeunt* DARNLEY and MARY HAMILTON.]

MARY SEYTON. For love's sake, after them,
And soft as love can.

[*Exeunt* MARY CARMICHAEL and MARY SEYTON.]

CHASTELARD. True, a goodly man.
What shapeliness and state he hath, what eyes,
Brave brow and lordly lip! were it not fit
Great queens should love him?

MARY BEATON. See you now, fair lord,
I have but scant breath's time to help myself,
And I must cast my heart out on a chance;
So bear with me. That we twain have loved well,
I have no heart nor wit to say; God wot
We had never made good lovers, you and I.
Look you, I would not have you love me, sir,
For all the love's sake in the world. I say,
You love the queen, and loving burns you up,
And mars the grace and joyous wit you had.
Turning your speech to sad, your face to strange,
Your mirth to nothing: and I am piteous, I,
Even as the queen is, and such women are;
And if I helped you to your love-longing,
Meseems some grain of love might fall my way
And love's god help me when I came to love;
I have read tales of men that won their loves
On some such wise.

CHASTELARD. If you mean mercifully,
I am bound to you past thought and thank; if worse,
I will but thank your lips and not your heart.

MARY BEATON. Nay, let love wait and praise me, in
God's name,

Some day when he shall find me; yet, God wot,
My lips are of one colour with my heart,
Withdraw now from me, and about midnight
In some close chamber without light or noise
It may be I shall get you speech of her;
She loves you well; it may be she will speak,
I wot not what; she loves you at her heart.
Let her not see that I have given you word,
Lest she take shame and hate her love. Till night.
Let her not see it.

CHASTELARD. I will not thank you now,
And then I'll die what sort of death you will.
Farewell.

[*Exit.*

MARY BEATON. And by God's mercy and my love's
I will find ways to earn such thank of you. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A Hall in the same.*

*The QUEEN, DARNLEY, MURRAY, RANDOLPH, the
MARIES, CHASTELARD, etc.*

QUEEN. Hath no man seen my lord of Chastelard?
Nay, no great matter. Keep you on that side:
Begin the purpose.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Madam, he is here.

QUEEN. Begin a measure now that other side.
I will not dance; let them play soft a little.
Fair sir, we had a dance to ——— to-night,
To teach our north folk all sweet ways of France;

DARNLEY.

Nay, no such thing;

Be not wroth, lady, I wot it was the queen
 Pricked each his friend out. Look you now—your ear—
 If love had gone by choosing—how they laugh,
 Lean lips together, and wring hands underhand!
 What, you look white too, sick of heart, ashamed,
 No marvel—for men call it—hark you though—

[*They pass.*]

MURRAY. Was the Queen found no merrier in
 France?

MARY HAMILTON. Why, have you seen her sorrow-
 ful to-night?

MURRAY. I say not so much; blithe she seems at
 whiles,

Gentle and goodly doubtless in all ways,
 But hardly with such lightness and quick heart
 As it was said.

MARY HAMILTON. 'Tis your great care of her
 Makes you misdoubt; nought else.

MURRAY.

Yea, may be so;

She has no cause I know to sadden her. [*They pass.*]

QUEEN. I am tired too soon; I could have danced
 down hours

Two years gone hence and felt no wearier.
 One grows much older northwards, my fair lord;
 I wonder men die south; meseems all France
 Smells sweet with living, and bright breath of days
 That keep men far from dying. Peace; pray you
 now,

No dancing more. Sing, sweet, and make us mirth;
 We have done with dancing measures: sing that song
 You call the song of love at ebb.

MARY BEATON (*sings*).

1.

*Between the sunset and the sea
My love laid hands and lips on me;
Of sweet came sour, of day came night,
Of long desire came brief delight:
Ah love, and what thing came of thee
Between the sea-downs and the sea?*

2.

*Between the sea-mark and the sea
Joy grew to grief, grief grew to me;
Love turned to tears, and tears to fire,
And dead delight to new desire;
Love's talk, love's touch there seemed to be
Between the sea-sand and the sea.*

3.

*Between the sundown and the sea
Love watched one hour of love with me;
Then down the all-golden water-ways
His feet flew after yesterdays;
I saw them come and saw them flee
Between the sea-foam and the sea.*

4.

*Between the sea-strand and the sea
Love fell on sleep, sleep fell on me;
The first star saw twain turn to one
Between the moonrise and the sun;
The next, that saw not love, saw me
Between the sea-banks and the sea.*

QUEEN.

Lo, sirs,
What mirth is here! Some song of yours, fair lord;

You know glad ways of rhyming—no such tunes
As go to tears.

CHASTELARD. I made this yesterday;
For its love's sake I pray you let it live. [*He sings.*]

I.

*Après tant de jours, après tant de pleurs,
Soyez secourable à mon âme en peine.
Voyez comme Avril fait l'amour aux fleurs;
Dame d'amour, dame aux belles couleurs,
Dieu vous a fait belle, Amour vous fait reine.*

2.

*Rions, je t'en prie; aimons, je le veux.
Le temps fuit et rit et ne revient guère
Pour baiser le bout de tes blonds cheveux,
Pour baiser tes cils, ta bouche et tes yeux;
L'amour n'a qu'un jour auprès de sa mère.*

QUEEN. 'Tis a true song; love shall not pluck time
back

Nor time lie down with love. For me, I am old;
Have you no hair changed since you changed to Scot?
I look each day to see my face drawn up
About the eyes, as if they sucked the cheeks.
I think this air and face of things here north
Puts snow at flower-time in the blood, and tears
Between the sad eyes and the merry mouth
In their youth-days.

CHASTELARD. It is a bitter air.

QUEEN. Faith, if I might be gone, sir, would I
stay?

I think, for no man's love's sake

CHASTELARD.

I think not.

QUEEN. Do you not mind at landing how the quay
Looked like a blind wet face in waste of wind
And washing of wan waves? how the hard mist
Made the hills ache? your songs lied loud, my knight,
They said my face would burn off cloud and rain
Seen once, and fill the crannied land with fire,
Kindle the capes in their blind black-grey hoods—
I know not what. You praise me past all loves;
And these men love me little; 'tis some fault,
I think, to love me: even a fool's sweet fault.
I have your verse still beating in my head
Of how the swallow got a wing broken
In the spring time, and lay upon his side
Watching the rest fly off i' the red leaf-time,
And broke his heart with grieving at himself
Before the snow came. Do you know that lord
With sharp-set eyes? and him with huge thewed throat?
Good friends to me; I had need love them well.
Why do you look one way? I will not have you
Keep your eyes here: 'tis no great wit in me
To care much now for old French friends of mine.—
Come, a fresh measure; come, play well for me,
Fair sirs, your playing puts life in foot and heart.—

MURRAY. Yea, a good sword too,
And of good kin; too light of loving though;
These jangling song-smiths are keen love-mongers,
They snap at all meats.

DARNLEY. What! by God I think,
For all his soft French face and bright boy's sword,
There be folks fairer: and for knightliness,
These hot-lipped brawls of Paris breed sweet knights—
Mere stabbers for a laugh across the wine.—

QUEEN. There, I have danced you down for once,
 fair lord;
You look pale now. Nay then for courtesy
I must needs help you; do not bow your head,
I am tall enough to reach close under it.

[*Kisses him.*]

Now come, we'll sit and see this passage through.—

DARNLEY. A courtesy, God help us! courtesy—
Pray God it wound not where it should heal wounds.
Why, there was here last year some lord of France
(Priest on the wrong side as some folk are prince)
Told tales of Paris ladies—nay, by God,
No jest for queen's lips to catch laughter of
That would keep clean; I wot he made good mirth,
But she laughed over sweetly, and in such wise—
Nay, I laughed too, but lothly.—

QUEEN. How they look!
The least thing courteous galls them to the bone.
What would one say now I were thinking of?

CHASTELARD. It seems, some sweet thing.

QUEEN. True, a sweet one, sir—
That madrigal you made Alvs de Saulx
Of the three ways of love; first kiss honour,

The second pity, and the last kiss love.

Which think you now was that I kissed you with?

CHASTELARD. It should be pity, if you be pitiful;
For I am past all honouring that keep
Outside the eye of battle, where my kin
Fallen overseas have found this many a day
No helm of mine between them; and for love,
I think of that as dead men of good days
Ere the wrong side of death was theirs, when God
Was friends with them.

QUEEN.

Good; call it pity then.

You have a subtle riddling skill at love
Which is not like a lover. For my part,
I am resolved to be well done with love,
Though I were fairer-faced than all the world;
As there be fairer. Think you, fair my knight,
Love shall live after life in any man?
I have given you stuff for riddles.

CHASTELARD.

Most sweet queen,

They say men dying remember, with sharp joy
And rapid reluctance of desire,
Some old thing, some swift breath of wind, some word,
Some sword-stroke or dead lute-strain, some lost sight,
Some sea-blossom stripped to the sun and burned
At naked ebb—some river-flower that breathes
Against the stream like a swooned swimmer's mouth—
Some tear or laugh ere lip and eye were man's—
Sweet stings that struck the blood in riding—nay,
Some garment or sky-colour or spice-smell,
And die with heart and face shut fast on it,
And know not why, and weep not; it may be
Men shall hold love fast always in such wise

In new fair lives where all are new things else,
And know not why, and weep not.

QUEEN.

A right rhyme,

And right a rhyme's worth: nay, a sweet song, though.
What, shall my cousin hold fast that love of his,
Her face and talk, when life ends? as God grant
His life end late and sweet; I love him well.
She is fair enough, his lover; a fair-faced maid,
With grey sweet eyes and tender touch of talk;
And that, God wot, I wist not. See you, sir,
Men say I needs must get wed hastily;
Do none point lips at him?

CHASTELARD.

Yea, guessingly.

QUEEN. God help such lips! and get me leave to laugh!
What should I do but paint and put him up
Like a gilt god, a saintship in a shrine,
For all fools' feast? God's mercy on men's wits!
Tall as a housetop and as bare of brain—
I'll have no staffs with fool-faced carven heads
To hang my life on. Nay, for love, no more,
For fear I laugh and set their eyes on edge
To find out why I laugh. Good night, fair lords;
Bid them cease playing. Give me your hand; good night.

SCENE III.—MARY BESSON'S *Chamber: night.*

Enter CHASTELARD.

CHASTELARD. I am not certain yet she will not come;
For I can feel her hand's heat still in mine,
Past doubting of, and see her brows half drawn,

And half a light in the eyes. If she come not,
I am no worse than he that dies to-night.
This two years' patience gets an end at least,
Whichever way I am well done with it.
How hard the thin sweet moon is, split and laced
And latticed over, just a stray of it
Catching and clinging at a strip of wall,
Hardly a hand's breadth. Did she turn indeed
In going out? not to catch up her gown
The page let slip, but to keep sight of me?
There was a soft small stir beneath her eyes
Hard to put on, a quivering of her blood
That knew of the old nights watched out wakefully.
Those measures of her dancing too were changed—
More swift and with more eager stops at whiles
And rapid pauses where breath failed her lips.

Enter MARY BEATON.

O, she is come: if you be she indeed
Let me but hold your hand; what, no word yet?
You turn and kiss me without word; O sweet,
If you will slay me be not over quick,
Kill me with some slow heavy kiss that plucks
The heart out at the lips. Alas! sweet love,
Give me some old sweet word to kiss away.
Is it a jest? for I can feel your hair
Touch me—I may embrace your body too?
I know you well enough without sweet words.
How should one make you speak? This is not she.
Come in the light; nay, let me see your eyes.
Ah, you it is? what have I done to you?
And do you look now to be slain for this
That you twist back and shudder like one stabbed?

MARY BEATON. Yea, kill me now and do not look
at me:

God knows I meant to die. Sir, for God's love
Kill me now quick ere I go mad with shame.

CHASTELARD. Cling not upon my wrists: let go the hilt:
Nay, you will bruise your hand with it: stand up:
You shall not have my sword forth.

MARY BEATON. Kill me now,
I will not rise: there, I am patient, see,
I will not strive, but kill me for God's sake.

CHASTELARD. Pray you rise up and be not shaken so:
Forgive me my rash words, my heart was gone
After the thing you were: be not ashamed;
Give me the shame, you have no part in it;
Can I not say a word shall do you good?
Forgive that too.

MARY BEATON. I shall run crazed with shame;
But when I felt your lips catch hold on mine
It stopped my breath: I would have told you all;
Let me go out; you see I lied to you,
And I am shamed; I pray you loose me, sir,
Let me go out.

CHASTELARD. Think no base things of me:
I were most base to let you go ashamed.
Think my heart's love and honour go with you:
Yea, while I live, for your love's noble sake,
I am your servant in what wise may be,
To love and serve you with right thankful heart.

MARY BEATON. I have given men leave to mock
me, and must bear
What shame they please: you have good cause to mock.
Let me pass now.

CHASTELARD. You know I mock you not.
If ever I leave off to honour you,
God give me shame! I were the worst churl born.

MARY BEATON. No marvel though the queen should
love you too,
Being such a knight. I pray you for her love,
Lord Chastelard, of your great courtesy,
Think now no scorn to give me my last kiss
That I shall have of man before I die.
Even the same lips you kissed and knew not of
Will you kiss now, knowing the shame of them,
And say no one word to me afterwards,
That I may see I have loved the best lover
And man most courteous of all men alive?

MARY SEYTON (*within*). Here, fetch the light: nay,
this way; enter all.

MARY BEATON. I am twice undone. Fly, get some
hiding, sir;
They have spied upon me somehow.

CHASTELARD.
Stand by my side.

Nay, fear not;

Enter MARY SEYTON *and* MARY HAMILTON.

MARY HAMILTON. Give me that light: this way.

CHASTELARD. What jest is here, fair ladies? it
walks late,
Something too late for laughing.

MARY SEYTON. Nay, fair sir,
What jest is this of yours? Look to your lady:
She is nigh swooned. The queen shall know all
this.

MARY HAMILTON. A grievous shame it is we are
fallen upon;

Hold forth the light. Is this your care of us?
Nay, come, look up: this is no game, God wot.

CHASTELARD. Shame shall befall them that speak
shamefully:

I swear this lady is as pure and good
As any maiden, and who believes me not
Shall keep the shame for his part and the lie.
To them that come in honour and not in hate
I will make answer. Lady, have good heart.
Give me the light there: I will see you forth.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.
DARNLEY.

SCENE I.—*The great Chamber in Holyrood.*

The QUEEN and MARY SEYTON.

QUEEN. But will you swear it?

MARY SEYTON. Swear it, madam?

QUEEN. Aye—

Swear it.

MARY SEYTON. Madam, I am not friends with them.

QUEEN. Swear then against them if you are not friends.

MARY SEYTON. Indeed I saw them kiss.

QUEEN. So lovers use—

What, their mouths close? a goodly way of love!

Or but the hands? or on her throat? Prithee—

You have sworn that.

MARY SEYTON. I say what I saw done.

QUEEN. Aye, you did see her cheeks (God smite them red!)

Kissed either side? what, they must eat strange food,
Those singing lips of his?

MARY SEYTON. Sweet meat enough—

They started at my coming five yards off,
But there they were.

QUEEN. A maid may have kissed cheeks
And no shame in them—yet one would not swear.
You have sworn that. Pray God he be not mad:
A sickness in his eyes. The left side love
(I was told that) and the right courtesy.
'Tis good fools' fashion. What, no more but this?
For me, God knows I am no whit wroth; not I;
But, for your fame's sake that her shame will sting,
I cannot see a way to pardon her—
For your fame's sake, less that be prated of.

MARY SEYTON. Nay, if she were not chaste—I have
 not said
She was not chaste.

QUEEN. I know you are tender of her;
And your sweet word will hardly turn her sweet.

MARY SEYTON. Indeed I would fain do her any good.
Shall I not take some gracious word to her?

QUEEN. Bid her not come or wait on me to-day.

MARY SEYTON. Will you see him?

QUEEN. See—O, this Chastelard?
He doth not well to sing maids into shame;
And folk are sharp here; yet for sweet friends' sake
Assuredly I'll see him. I am not wroth.
A goodly man, and a good sword thereto—
It may be he shall wed her. I am not wroth.

MARY SEYTON. Nay, though she bore with him, she
 hath no great love,
I doubt me, that way.

QUEEN. God mend all, I pray—
And keep us from all wrong-doing and wild words.
I think there is no fault men fall upon
But I could pardon. Look you, I would swear

She were no paramour for any man,
So well I love her.

MARY SEYTON. Am I to bid him in?

QUEEN. As you will, sweet. But if you held me
hard

You did me grievous wrong. Doth he wait there?
Men call me over tender; I had rather so,
Than too ungracious. Father, what with you?

Enter FATHER BLACK.

FATHER BLACK. God's peace and health of soul be
with the queen!

And pardon be with me though I speak truth.
As I was going on peaceable men's wise
Through your good town, desiring no man harm,
A kind of shameful woman with thief's lips
Spake somewhat to me over a thrust-out chin,
Soliciting as I deemed an alms; which alms
(Remembering what was writ of Magdalen)
I gave not grudging but with pure good heart,
When lo some scurril children that lurked near,
Set there by Satan for my stumbling-stone,
Fell hooting with necks thwart and eyes asquint,
Screeched and made horns and shot out tongues at me,
As at my Lord the Jews shot out their tongues
And made their heads wag; I considering this
Took up my cross in patience and passed forth:
Nevertheless one ran between my feet
And made me totter, using speech and signs
I smart with shame to think of: then my blood
Kindled, and I was moved to smite the knave,
And the knave howled; whereat the lewd whole herd
Brake forth upon me and cast mire and stones

So that I ran sore risk of bruise or gash
 If they had touched; likewise I heard men say,
 (Their foul speech missed not of mine ear) they cried,
 "This devil's mass-priest hankers for new flesh
 Like a dry hound; let him seek such at home,
 Snuff and smoke out the queen's French—"

QUEEN. They said that?

FATHER BLACK. "French paramours that breed more
 shames than sons

All her court through;" forgive me.

QUEEN. With my heart.

Father, you see the hatefulness of these—
 They loathe us for our love. I am not moved:
 What should I do being angry? By this hand
 (Which is not big enough to bruise their lips),
 I marvel what thing should be done with me
 To make me wroth. We must have patience with us
 When we seek thank of men.

FATHER BLACK. Madam, farewell;
 I pray God keep you in such patient heart. [*Exit.*]

QUEEN. Let him come now.

MARY SEYTON. Madam, he is at hand. [*Exit.*]

Enter CHASTELARD.

QUEEN. Give me that broidery frame; how, gone so
 soon?

No maid about? Reach me one skein of silk.
 What, are you come, fair lord? Now by my life
 That lives here idle, I am right glad of you;
 I have slept so well and sweet since yesternight
 It seems our dancing put me in glad heart.
 Did you sleep well?

And kiss you (you were taller in my dream)
I missed your lips and woke.

CHASTELARD. Sweet dreams, you said?
An evil dream I hold it for, sweet love.

QUEEN. You call love sweet; yea, what is bitter,
then?

There's nothing broken sleep could hit upon
So bitter as the breaking down of love.
You call me sweet; I am not sweet to you,
Nor you—O, I would say not sweet to me,
And if I said so I should hardly lie.
But there have been those things between us, sir,
That men call sweet.

CHASTELARD. I know not how *There is*
Turns to *There hath been*; 'tis a heavier change
Than change of flesh to dust. Yet though years change
And good things end and evil things grow great,
The old love that was, or that was dreamed about,
That sang and kissed and wept upon itself,
Laughed and ran mad with love of its own face,
That was a sweet thing.

QUEEN. Nay, I know not well.
'Tis when the man is held fast underground
They say for sooth what manner of heart he had.
We are alive, and cannot be well sure
If we loved much or little: think you not
It were convenient one of us should die?

CHASTELARD. Madam, your speech is harsh to understand.

QUEEN. Why, there could come no change then;
one of us
Would never need to fear our love might turn

To the sad thing that it may grow to be.
I would sometimes all things were dead asleep
That I have loved, all buried in soft beds
And sealed with dreams and visions, and each dawn
Sung to by sorrows, and all night assuaged
By short sweet kisses and by sweet long loves
For old life's sake, lest weeping overmuch
Should wake them in a strange new time, and arm
Memory's blind hand to kill forgetfulness.

CHASTELARD. Look, you dream still, and sadly.

QUEEN. Sooth, a dream;

For such things died or lied in sweet love's face,
And I forget them not, God help my wit!
I would the whole world were made up of sleep
And life not fashioned out of lies and loves.
We foolish women have such times, you know,
When we are weary or afraid or sick
For perfect nothing.

CHASTELARD (*aside*). Now would one be fain
To know what bitter or what dangerous thing
She thinks of, softly chafing her soft lip.
She must mean evil.

QUEEN. Are you sad too, sir,
That you say nothing?

CHASTELARD. I? not sad a jot—
Though this your talk might make a blithe man sad.

QUEEN. O me! I must not let stray sorrows out;
They are ill to fledge, and if they feel blithe air
They wail and chirp untunefully. Would God
I had been a man! when I was born, men say,
My father turned his face and wept to think
I was no man.

CHASTELARD. Will you weep too?

QUEEN.

In sooth,

If I were man I should be no base man;
I could have fought; yea, I could fight now too
If men would shew me; I would I were the king!
I should be all ways better than I am.

CHASTELARD. Nay, would you have more honour,
having this—

Men's hearts and loves and the sweet spoil of souls
Given you like simple gold to bind your hair?
Say you were king of thews, not queen of souls.
An iron headpiece hammered to a head,
You might fail too.

QUEEN.

No, then I would not fail,

Or God should make me woman back again.
To be King James—you hear men say *King James*,
The word sounds like a piece of gold thrown down,
Rings with a round and royal note in it—
A name to write good record of; this king
Fought here and there, was beaten such a day,
And came at last to a good end, his life
Being all lived out, and for the main part well
And like a king's life; then to have men say
(As now they say of Flodden, here they broke
And there they held up to the end) years back
They saw you—yea, *I saw the king's face helmed
Red in the hot lit foreground : some fight
Hold the whole war as it were by the bit, a horse
Fit for his knees' grip—the great rearing war
That frothed with lips flung up, and shook men's lives
Off either flank of it like snow. I saw
(You could not hear as his sword rang), saw him*

*Shout, laugh, smite straight, and flaw the riven ranks,
Move as the wind moves, and his horse's feet
Stripe their long flags with dust. Why, if one died,
To die so in the heart and heat of war
Were a much goodlier thing than living soft
And speaking sweet for fear of men. Woe's me,
Is there no way to pluck this body off?
Then I should never fear a man again,
Even in my dreams I should not; no, by heaven.*

CHASTELARD. I never thought you did fear anything.

QUEEN. God knows I do; I could be sick with wrath
To think what grievous fear I have 'twixt whiles
Of mine own self and of base men: last night
If certain lords were glancing where I was
Under the eyelid, with sharp lip and brow,
I tell you, for pure shame and fear of them,
I could have gone and slain them.

CHASTELARD. Verily,
You are changed since those good days that fell in
France;
But yet I think you are not so changed at heart
As to fear man.

QUEEN. I would I had no need.
Lend me your sword a little; a fair sword;
I see the fingers that I hold it with
Clear in the blade, bright pink, the shell-colour,
Brighter than flesh is really, curved all round.
Now men would mock if I should wear it here,
Bound under bosom with a girdle, here,
And yet I have heart enough to wear it well.
Speak to me like a woman, let me see
If I can play at man.

CHASTELARD. God save King James!

QUEEN. Would you could change now! Fie, this
 will not do;

Unclass your sword; nay, the hilt hurts my side;
It sticks fast here. Unbind this knot for me:
Stoop, and you'll see it closer; thank you: there.
Now I can breathe, sir. Ah! it hurts me, though:
This was fool's play.

CHASTELARD. Yea, you are better so,
Without the sword; your eyes are stronger things,
Whether to save or slay.

QUEEN. Alas, my side!
It hurts right sorely. Is it not pitiful
Our souls should be so bound about with flesh
Even when they leap and smite with wings and feet,
The least pain plucks them back, puts out their eyes,
Turns them to tears and words? Ah my sweet knight,
You have the better of us that weave and weep
While the blithe battle blows upon your eyes
Like rain and wind; yet I remember too
When this last year the fight at Corrichie
Reddened the rushes with stained fen-water,
I rode with my good men and took delight,
Feeling the sweet clear wind upon my eyes
And rainy soft smells blown upon my face
In riding: then the great fight jarred and joined,
And the sound stung me right through heart and all;
For I was here, see, gazing on the hills,
In the wet air; our housings were all wet,
And not a plume stood stiffly past the ear
But flapped between the bridle and the neck;
And under us we saw the ba go

Like running water; I could see by fits
Some helm the rain fell shining off, some flag
Snap from the staff, shorn through or broken short
In the man's falling: yea, one seemed to catch
The very grasp of tumbled men at men,
Teeth clenched in throats, hands riveted in hair,
Tearing the life out with no help of swords.
And all the clamour seemed to shine, the light
Seemed to shout as a man doth; twice I laughed—
I tell you, twice my heart swelled out with thirst
To be into the battle; see, fair lord,
I swear it seemed I might have made a knight,
And yet the simple bracing of a belt
Makes me cry out; this is too pitiful,
This dusty half of us made up with fears.—
Have you been ever quite so glad to fight
As I have thought men must? pray you, speak
truth.

CHASTELARD. Yea, when the time came, there caught
hold of me

Such pleasure in the head and hands and blood
As may be kindled under loving lips:
Crossing the ferry once to the Clerks' Field,
I mind me how the plashing noise of Seine
Put fire into my face for joy, and how
My blood kept measure with the swinging boat
Till we touched land, all for the sake of that
Which should be soon.

QUEEN. Her name, for God's love, sir;
You slew your friend for love's sake? nay, the
name.

CHASTELARD. Faith, I forget.

QUEEN. Now by the faith I have
You have no faith to swear by.

CHASTELARD. A good sword:
We left him quiet after a thrust or twain.

QUEEN. I would I had been at hand and marked
them off

As the maids did when we played singing games:
You outwent me at rhyming; but for faith,
We fight best there. I would I had seen you fight.

CHASTELARD. I would you had; his play was worth
an eye;

He made some gallant way before that pass
Which made me way through him.

QUEEN. Would I saw that—
How did you slay him?

CHASTELARD. A clean pass—this way;
Right in the side here, where the blood has root.
His wrist went round in pushing, see you, thus,
Or he had pierced me.

QUEEN. Yea, I see, sweet knight.
I have a mind to love you for his sake;
Would I had seen.

CHASTELARD. Hugues de Marsillac—
I have the name now; 'twas a goodly one
Before he changed it for a dusty name.

QUEEN. Talk not of death; I would hear living
talk

Of good live swords and good strokes struck withal,
Brave battles and the mirth of mingling men,
Not of cold names you greet a dead man with.
You are yet young for fight; but in fight
Have you never caught a wound?

CHASTELARD.

Yea, twice or so:

The first time in a little outlying field
 (My first field) at the sleepy grey of dawn,
 They found us drowsy, fumbling at our girths,
 And rode us down by heaps; I took a hurt
 Here in the shoulder.

QUEEN.

Ah, I mind well now;

Did you not ride a day's space afterward,
 Having two wounds? yea, Dandelot it was,
 That Dandelot took word of it. I know,
 Sitting at meat when the news came to us
 I had nigh swooned but for those Florence eyes
 Slanting my way with sleek lids drawn up close—
 Yea, and she said, the Italian brokeress,
 She said such men were good for great queens' love.
 I would you might die, when you come to die,
 Like a knight slain. Pray God we make good ends.
 For love too, love dies hard or easily,
 But some way dies on some day, ere we die.

CHASTELARD. You made a song once of old flowers
 and loves,

Will you not sing that rather? 'tis long gone
 Since you sang last.

QUEEN.

I had rather sigh than sing

And sleep than sigh; 'tis long since verily,
 But I will once more sing; aye, thus it was.

[Sings.

I.

*J'ai vu faner bien des choses,
 Mainte feuille aller au vent.
 En songeant aux vieilles roses,
 J'ai pleuré souvent.*

2.

*Vois-tu dans les roses mortes
Amour qui sourit caché?
O mon amant, à nos portes
L'as-tu vu couché?*

3.

*As-tu vu jamais au monde
Vénus chasser et courir?
Fille de l'onde, avec l'onde
Doit-elle mourir?*

4.

*Aux jours de neige et de givre
L'amour s'effeuille et s'endort;
Avec mai doit-il revivre,
Ou bien est-il mort?*

5.

*Qui sait où s'en vont les roses?
Qui sait où s'en va le vent?
En songeant à telles choses,
J'ai pleuré souvent.*

I never heard yet but love made good knights,
But for pure faith, by Mary's holiness,
I think she lies about men's lips asleep,
And if one kiss or pluck her by the hand
To wake her, why God help your woman's wit,
Faith is but dead; dig her grave deep at heart,
And hide her face with cerecloths; farewell faith.
Would I could tell why I tell idly. Look,
Here come my riddle-readers. Welcome all;

Enter MURRAY, DARNLEY, RANDOLPH, LINDSAY, MORTON,
and other LORDS.

Sirs, be right welcome. Stand you by my side,
Fair cousin, I must lean on love or fall;
You are a goodly staff, sir; tall enough,
And fair enough to serve. My gentle lords,
I am full glad of God that in great grace
He hath given me such a lordly stay as this;
There is no better friended queen alive.
For the repealing of those banished men
That stand in peril yet of last year's fault,
It is our will; you have our seal to that.
Brother, we hear harsh bruits of bad report
Blown up and down about our almoner;
See you to this: let him be sought into:
They say lewd folk make ballads of their spleen,
Strew miry ways of words with talk of him;
If they have cause let him be spoken with.

LINDSAY. Madam, they charge him with so rank a
life

Were it not well this fellow were plucked out—
Seeing this is not an eye that doth offend,
But a blurred glass it were no harm to break;
Yea rather it were gracious to be done?

QUEEN. Let him be weighed, and use him as he is;
I am of my nature pitiful, ye know,
And cannot turn my love unto a thorn
In so brief space. Ye are all most virtuous;
Yea, there is goodness grafted on this land;
But yet compassion is some part of God.
There is much heavier business held on hand
Than one man's goodness: yea, as things fare here,

A matter worth more weighing. All you wot
I am to choose a help to my weak feet,
A lamp before my face, a lord and friend
To walk with me in weary ways, high up
Between the wind and rain and the hot sun.
Now I have chosen a helper to myself,
I wot the best a woman ever won;
A man that loves me, and a royal man,
A goodly love and lord for any queen.
But for the peril and despite of men
I have sometime tarried and withheld myself,
Not fearful of his worthiness nor you,
But with some lady's loathing to let out
My whole heart's love; for truly this is hard,
Not like a woman's fashion, shamefacedness
And noble grave reluctance of herself
To be the tongue and cry of her own heart.
Nathless plain speech is better than much wit,
So ye shall bear with me; albeit I think
Ye have caught the mark whereat my heart is bent.
I have kept close counsel and shut up men's lips,
But lightly shall a woman's will slip out,
The foolish little winged will of her,
Through cheek or eye when tongue is charmed asleep.
For that good lord I have good will to wed,
I wot he knew long since which way it flew,
Even till it lit on his right wrist and sang.
Lo, here I take him by the hand: fair lords,
This is my kinsman, made of mine own blood,
I take to halve the state and services
That bow down to me, and be my head,
My chief, my master, my sweet lord and king.

Now shall I never say "sweet cousin" more
To my dear head and husband; here, fair sir,
I give you all the heart of love in me
To gather off my lips. Did it like you,
The taste of it? sir, it was whole and true.
God save our king!

DARNLEY. Nay, nay, sweet love, no lord;
No king of yours though I were lord of these.

QUEEN. Let word be sent to all good friends of
ours

To help us to be glad; England and France
Shall bear great part of our rejoicings up.
Give me your hand, dear lord; for from this time
I must not walk alone. Lords, have good cheer:
For you shall have a better face than mine
To set upon your kingly gold and shew
For Scotland's forehead in the van of things.
Go with us now, and see this news set out.

[*Exeunt* QUEEN, DARNLEY, and LORDS.]

As CHASTELARD *is going out, enter* MARY BEATON.

MARY BEATON. Have you yet heard? You knew
of this?

CHASTELARD. I know.

I was just thinking how such things were made
And were so fair as this is. Do you know
She held me here and talked—the most sweet talk
Men ever heard of?

MARY BEATON. You hate me to the heart.
What will you do?

CHASTELARD. I know not: die some day,
But live as long and lightly as I can.
Will you now love me? faith, but if you do,

It were much better you were dead and hearsed.
Will you do one thing for me?

MARY BEATON.

Yea, all things.

CHASTELARD. Speak truth a little, for God's sake:
indeed

It were no harm to do. Come, will you, sweet?
Though it be but to please God.

MARY BEATON.

What will you do?

CHASTELARD. Aye, true, I must do somewhat. Let
me see:

To get between and tread upon his face—
Catch both her hands and bid men look at them,
How pure they were—I would do none of these,
Though they got wedded all the days in the year.
We may do well yet when all's come and gone.
I pray you on this wedding night of theirs
Do but one thing that I shall ask of you,
And Darnley will not hunger as I shall
For that good time. Sweet, will you swear me this?

MARY BEATON. Yea; though to do it were mortal
to my soul

As the chief sin.

CHASTELARD. I thank you: let us go.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.
THE QUEEN.

SCENE I.—*The Queen's Chamber. Night.
Lights burning in front of the bed.*

Enter CHASTELARD *and* MARY BEATON.

MARY BEATON. Be tender of your feet.

CHASTELARD.

I shall not fail:

These ways have light enough to help a man
That walks with such stirred blood in him as mine.

MARY BEATON. I would yet plead with you to save
your head:

Nay, let this be then: sir, I chide you not.

Nay, let all come. Do not abide her yet.

CHASTELARD. Have you read never in French books
the song

Called the Duke's Song, some boy made ages back,
A song of drag-nets hauled across thwart seas
And plucked up with rent sides, and caught therein
A strange-haired woman with sad singing lips,
Cold in the cheek like any stray of sea.
And sweet to touch? so that men seeing her face,
And how she sighed out little Ahs of pain
And soft cries sobbing sideways from her mouth,

Fell in hot love, and having lain with her
Died soon? one time I could have told it through:
Now I have kissed the sea-witch on her eyes
And my lips ache with it: but I shall sleep
Full soon, and a good space of sleep.

MARY BEATON.

Alas!

CHASTELARD. What makes you sigh though I be
found a fool?

You have no blame: and for my death, sweet friend,
I never could have lived long either way.
Why, as I live, the joy I have of this
Would make men mad that were not mad with love;
I hear my blood sing, and my lifted heart
Is like a springing water blown of wind
For pleasure of this deed. Now, in God's name,
I swear if there be danger in delight
I must die now: if joys have deadly teeth,
I'll have them bite my soul to death, and end
In the old asp's way, Egyptian-wise; be killed
In a royal purple fashion. Look, my love
Would kill me if my body were past hurt
Of any man's hand; and to die thereof,
I say, is sweeter than all sorts of life.
I would not have her love me now, for then
I should die meanlier some time. I am safe,
Sure of her face, my life's end in her sight,
My blood shed out about her feet—by God,
My heart feels drunken when I think of it.
See you, she will not rid herself of me,
Not though she slay me: her sweet lips and life
Will smell of my spilt blood.

MARY BEATON.

Give me good night.

CHASTELARD. Yea, and good thanks.

[*Exit* MARY BEATON.]

Here is the very place:

Here has her body bowed the pillows in
And here her head thrust under made the sheet
Smell soft of her mixed hair and spice: even here
Her arms pushed back the coverlet, pulled here
The golden silken curtain halfway in
It may be, and made room to lean out loose,
Fair tender fallen arms. Now, if God would,
Doubtless he might take pity on my soul
To give me three clear hours, and then red hell
Snare me for ever: this were merciful:
If I were God now I should do thus much.
I must die next, and this were not so hard
For him to let me eat sweet fruit and die
With my lips sweet from it. For one shall have
This fare for common days'-bread, which to me
Should be a touch kept always on my sense
To make hell soft, yea, the keen pain of hell
Soft as the loosening of wound arms in sleep.
Ah, love is good, and the worst part of it
More than all things but death. She will be here
In some small while, and see me face to face
That am to give up life for her and go
Where a man lies with all his loves put out
And his lips full of earth. I think on her,
And the old pleasure stings and makes half-tears
Under mine eyelids. Prithee, love, come fast,
That I may die soon; yea, some kisses through,
I shall die joyfully enough, so God
Keep me alive till then. I feel her feet

Coming far off; now must I hold my heart,
Steadying my blood to see her patiently.

[*Hides himself by the bed.*]

Enter the QUEEN and DARNLEY.

QUEEN. Nay, now go back: I have sent off my folk,
Maries and all. Pray you, let be my hair;
I cannot twist the gold thread out of it
That you wound in so close. Look, here it clings:
Ah! now you mar my hair unwinding it.
Do me no hurt, sir.

DARNLEY. I would do you ease;
Let me stay here.

QUEEN. Nay, will you go, my lord?

DARNLEY. Eh? would you use me as a girl does
fruit,
Touched with her mouth and pulled away for game
To look thereon ere her lips feed? but see,
By God, I fare the worse for you.

QUEEN. Fair sir,
Give me this hour to watch with and say prayers:
You have not faith—it needs me to say prayers,
That with commending of this deed to God
I may get grace for it.

DARNLEY. Why, lacks it grace?
Is not all wedlock gracious of itself?

QUEEN. Nay, that I know not of. Come, sweet, be
hence.

DARNLEY. You have a sort of jewel in your neck
That's like mine here.

QUEEN. Keep off your hands and go:
You have no courtesy to be a king.

DARNLEY. Well, I will go: nay, but I thwart you not.

Do as you will, and get you grace; farewell,
And for my part, grace keep this watch with me!
For I need grace to bear with you so much. [Exit.

QUEEN. So, he is forth. Let me behold myself;
I am too pale to be so hot; I marvel
So little colour should be bold in the face
When the blood is not quieted. I have
But a brief space to cool my thoughts upon.
If one should wear the hair thus heaped and curled
Would it look best? or this way in the neck?
Could one ungirdle in such wise one's heart

[Taking off her girdle.

And ease it inwards as the waist is eased
By slackening of the slid clasp on it!
How soft the silk is—gracious colour too;
Violet shadows like new veins thrown up
Each arm, and gold to fleck the faint sweet green
Where the wrist lies thus eased. I am right glad
I have no maids about to hasten me—
So I will rest and see my hair shed down
On either silk side of my woven sleeves,
Get some new way to bind it back with—yea,
Fair mirror-glass, I am well ware of you,
Yea, I know that, I am quite beautiful.
How my hair shines!—Fair face, be friends with me
And I will sing to you; look in my face
Now, and your mouth must help the song in mine.

*Alys la châtelaine
Voit venir de par Seine
Thiébault le capitaine
Qui parle ainsi:*

Was that the wind in the casement? nay, no more
 But the comb drawn through half my hissing hair
 Laid on my arms—yet my flesh moved at it.

*Dans ma camaille
 Plus de clou qui vaille,
 Dans ma cotte-maille
 Plus de fer aussi.*

Ah, but I wrong the ballad-verse: what's good
 In such frayed fringes of old rhymes, to make
 Their broken burden lag with us? meseems
 I could be sad now if I fell to think
 The least sad thing; aye, that sweet lady's fool,
 Fool sorrow, would make merry with mine eyes
 For a small thing. Nay, but I will keep glad,
 Nor shall old sorrow be false friends with me.
 But my first wedding was not like to this—
 Fair faces then and laughter and sweet game,
 And a pale little mouth that clung on mine
 When I had kissed him by the faded eyes
 And either thin cheek beating with faint blood.
 Well, he was sure to die soon; I do think
 He would have given his body to be slain,
 Having embraced my body. Now, God knows,
 I have no man to do as much for me
 As give me but a little of his blood
 To fill my beauty from, though I go down
 Pale to my grave for want—I think not. Pale—
 I am too pale surely—Ah!

[Sees him in the glass, coming forward.]

CHASTELARD.

Be not afraid.

QUEEN. Saint Mary! what a shaken wit have I!

Nay, is it you? who let you through the doors?
Where be my maidens? which way got you in?
Nay, but stand up, kiss not my hands so hard;
By God's fair body, if you but breathe on them
You are just dead and slain at once. What adder
Has bit you mirthful mad? for by this light
A man to have his head laughed off for mirth
Is no great jest. Lay not your eyes on me;
What, would you not be slain?

CHASTELARD.

I pray you, madam,

Bear with me a brief space and let me speak.
I will not touch your garments even, nor speak
But in soft wise, and look some other way,
If that it like you; for I came not here
For pleasure of the eyes; yet, if you will,
Let me look on you.

QUEEN.

As you will, fair sir.

Give me that coif to gather in my hair—
I thank you—and my girdle—nay, that side.
Speak, if you will: yet if you will be gone,
Why, you shall go, because I hate you not.
You know that I might slay you with my lips,
With calling out? but I will hold my peace.

CHASTELARD. Yea, do some while. I had a thing
to say;

I know not wholly what thing. O my sweet,
I am come here to take farewell of love
That I have served, and life that I have lived
Made up of love, here in the sight of you
That all my life's time I loved more than God,
Who quits me thus with bitter death for it.
For you well know that I must shortly die,

My life being wound about you as it is,
Who love me not; yet do not hate me, sweet,
But tell me wherein I came short of love;
For doubtless I came short of a just love,
And fell in some fool's fault that angered you.
Now that I talk men dig my grave for me
Out in the rain, and in a little while
I shall be thrust in some sad space of earth
Out of your eyes; and you, O you my love,
A newly-wedded lady full of mirth
And a queen girt with all good people's love,
You shall be fair and merry in all your days.
Is this so much for me to have of you?
Do but speak, sweet: I know these are no words
A man should say though he were now to die,
But I am as a child for love, and have
No strength at heart; yea, I am afraid to die,
For the harsh dust will lie upon my face
Too thick to see you past. Look how I love you;
I did so love you always, that your face
Seen through my sleep has wrung mine eyes to tears
For pure delight in you. Why do you thus?
You answer not, but your lips curl in twain
And your face moves; there, I shall make you weep
And be a coward too; it were much best
I should be slain.

QUEEN. Yea, best such folk were slain;
Why should they live to cozen fools with lies?
You would swear now you have used me faithfully
Shall I not make you swear? I am ware of you:
You will not do it; nay, for fear of God
You will not swear. Come, I am merciful;

God made a foolish woman, making me,
And I have loved your mistress with whole heart;
Say you do love her, you shall marry her
And she give thanks: yet I could wish your love
Had not so lightly chosen forth a face;
For your fair sake, because I hate you not.

CHASTELARD. What is to say? why, you do surely
know

That since my days were counted for a man's
I have loved you; yea, how past help and sense,
Whatever thing was bitter to my love,
I have loved you; how when I rode in war
Your face went floated in among men's helms,
Your voice went through the shriek of slipping swords;
Yea, and I never have loved women well,
Seeing always in my sight I had your lips
Curled over, red and sweet; and the soft space
Of carven brows, and splendour of great throat
Swayed lily-wise: what pleasure should one have
To wind his arms about a lesser love?
I have seen you; why, this were joy enough
For God's eyes up in heaven, only to see
And to come never nearer than I am.
Why, it was in my flesh, my bone and blood,
Bound in my brain, to love you; yea, and writ
All my heart over: if I would lie to you
I doubt I could not lie. Ah, you see now,
You know now well enough; yea, there, sweet love,
Let me kiss there.

QUEEN.

I love you best of them.

Clasp me quite round till your lips cleave on mine,
False mine, that did you wrong. Forgive them dearly,

As you are sweet to them; for by love's love
I am not that evil woman in my heart
That laughs at a rent faith. O Chastelard,
Since this was broken to me of your new love
I have not seen the face of a sweet hour.
Nay, if there be no pardon in a man,
What shall a woman have for loving him?
Pardon me, sweet.

CHASTELARD. Yea, so I pardon you,
And this side now; the first way. Would God please
To slay me so! who knows how he might please?
Now I am thinking, if you know it not,
How I might kill you, kiss your breath clean out,
And take your soul to bring mine through to God
That our two souls might close and be one twain
Or a twain one, and God himself want skill
To set us either severally apart.
O, you must overlive me many years,
And many years my soul be in waste hell;
But when some time God can no more refrain
To lay death like a kiss across your lips,
And great lords bear you clothed with funeral things,
And your crown girded over deadly brows,
Then after all your happy reach of life
For pity you shall touch me with your eyes,
Remembering love was fellow with my flesh
Here in sweet earth, and make me well of love
And heal my many years with piteousness.

QUEEN. You talk too sadly and too feignedly.

CHASTELARD. Too sad, but not too feigned; I am sad
That I shall die here without feigning thus;
And without feigning I were fain to live.

QUEEN. Alas, you will be taken presently
And then you are but dead. Pray you get hence.

CHASTELARD. I will not.

QUEEN. Nay, for God's love be away;
You will be slain and I get shame. God's mercy!
You were stark mad to come here; kiss me, sweet.
Oh, I do love you more than all men! yea,
Take my lips to you, close mine eyes up fast,
So you leave hold a little: there, for pity,
Abide now, and to-morrow come to me.
Nay, lest one see red kisses in my throat—
Dear God! what shall I give you to be gone?

CHASTELARD. I will not go. Look, here's full night
grown up;
Why should I seek to sleep away from here?
The place is soft and the lights burn for sleep;
Be not you moved; I shall lie well enough.

QUEEN. You are utterly undone. Sweet, by my life,
You shall be saved with taking ship at once.
For if you stay this foolish love's hour out
There is not ten days' likely life in you.
This is no choice.

CHASTELARD. Nay, for I will not go.

QUEEN. Oh me! this is that Bayard's blood of yours
That makes you mad; yea, and you shall not stay.
I do not understand. Mind, you must die.
Alas, poor lord, you have no sense of me;
I shall be deadly to you.

CHASTELARD. Yea, I saw that;
But I saw not that when my death's day came
You could be quite so sweet to me.

QUEEN.

My love!

If I could kiss my heart's root out on you
 You would taste love hid at the core of me.

CHASTELARD. Kiss me twice more. This beautiful
 bowed head

That has such hair with kissing ripples in
 And shivering soft eyelashes and brows
 With fluttered blood; but laugh a little, sweetly,
 That I may see your sad mouth's laughing look
 I have used sweet hours in seeing. O, will you weep?
 I pray you do not weep.

QUEEN. Nay, dear, I have
 No tears in me; I never shall weep much,
 I think, in all my life: I have wept for wrath
 Sometimes and for mere pain, but for love's pity
 I cannot weep at all. I would to God
 You loved me less; I give you all I can
 For all this love of yours, and yet I am sure
 I shall live out the sorrow of your death
 And be glad afterwards. You know I am sorry.
 I should weep now; forgive me for your part,
 God made me hard, I think. Alas, you see
 I had fain been other than I am.

CHASTELARD. Yea, love.
 Comfort your heart. What way am I to die?

QUEEN. Ah, will you go yet, sweet?

CHASTELARD. No, by God's body.
 You will not see? how shall I make you see?
 Look, it may be love was a sort of curse
 Made for my plague and mixed up with my days
 Somewise in their beginning; or indeed
 A bitter birth begotten of sad stars
 At mine own body's birth, that heaven might make

My life taste sharp where other men drank sweet;
But whether in heavy body or broken soul,
I know it must go on to be my death.
There was the matter of my fate in me
When I was fashioned first, and given such life
As goes with a sad end; no fault but God's.
Yea, and for all this I am not penitent:
You see I am perfect in these sins of mine,
I have my sins writ in a book to read;
Now I shall die and be well done with this.
But I am sure you cannot see such things,
God knows I blame you not.

QUEEN.

What shall be said?

You know most well that I am sorrowful.

But you should chide me. Sweet, you have seen fair
wars,

Have seen men slain and ridden red in them;
Why will you die a chamberer's death like this?
What, shall no praise be written of my knight,
For my fame's sake?

CHASTELARD.

Nay, no great praise, I think;

I will no more; what should I do with death,

Though I died goodly out of sight of you?

I have gone once: here am I set now, sweet,

Till the end come. That is your husband, hark,

He knocks at the outer door. Kiss me just once.

You know now all you have to say. Nay, love,

Let him come quickly.

Enter DARNLEY, and afterwards the MARIES.

DARNLEY.

Yea, what thing is here?

Aye, this was what the doors shut fast upon—

Aye, trust you to be fast at prayer, my sweet?

By God I have a mind——

CHASTELARD.

What mind then, sir?

A liar's lewd mind, to coin sins for jest,
 Because you take me in such wise as this?
 Look you, I have to die soon, and I swear,
 That I am no liar but a free knight and lord,
 I shall die clear of any sin to you,
 Save that I came for no good will of mine;
 I am no carle, I play fair games with faith,
 And by mine honour for my sake I swear
 I say but truth; for no man's sake save mine,
 Lest I die shamed. Madam, I pray you say
 I am no liar; you know me what I am,
 A sinful man and shortly to be slain,
 That in a simple insolence of love
 Have stained with a fool's eyes your holy hours
 And with a fool's words put your pity out;
 Nathless you know if I be liar or no,
 Wherefore for God's sake give me grace to swear
 (Yea, for mine too) how past all praise you are
 And stainless of all shame; and how all men
 Lie, saying you are not most good and innocent,
 Yea, the one thing good as God.

DARNLEY.

O sir, we know

You can swear well, being taken; you fair French
 Dare swallow God's name for a lewd love-sake
 As it were water. Nay, we know, we know;
 Save your sweet breath now lest you lack it soon;
 We are simple, we; we have not heard of you.
 Madam, by God you are well shamed in him:
 Aye, trust you to be fingering in one's face,

Play with one's neck-chain? ah, your maiden's man,
A relic of your people's!

CHASTELARD. Hold your peace,
Or I will set an edge on your own lie
Shall scar yourself. Madam, have out your guard;
'Tis time I were got hence.

QUEEN. Sweet Hamilton,
Hold you my hand and help me to sit down.
O Henry, I am beaten from my wits—
Let me have time and live; call out my people—
Bring forth some armed guard to lay hold on him;
But see no man be slain. Sirs, hide your swords;
I will not have men slain.

DARNLEY. What, is this true?
Call the queen's people—help the queen there, you—
Ho, sirs, come in.

Enter some with the Guard.

QUEEN. Lay hold upon that man;
Bear him away, but see he have no hurt.

CHASTELARD. Into your hands I render up myself
With a free heart; deal with me how you list,
But courteously, I pray you. Take my sword.
Farewell, great queen; the sweetness in your look
Makes life look bitter on me. Farewell, sirs.

[He is taken out.]

DARNLEY. Yea, pluck him forth, and have him
hanged by dawn;
He shall find bed enow to sleep. God's love!
That such a knave should be a knight like this!

QUEEN. Sir, peace awhile; this shall be as I
please;

Take patience to you. Lords, I pray you see
All be done goodly; look they wrong him not.
Carmichael, you shall sleep with me to-night;
I am sorely shaken, even to the heart. Fair lords,
I thank you for your care. Sweet, stay by me.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.
MURRAY.

SCENE I.—*The Queen's Lodging at St. Andrew's.*

The QUEEN and the four MARIES.

QUEEN. Why will you break my heart with praying
to me?

You Seyton, you Carmichael, you have wits,
You are not all run to tears; you do not think
It is my wrath or will that whets this axe
Against his neck?

MARY SEYTON. Nay, these three weeks ago
I said the queen's wrath was not sharp enough
To shear a neck.

QUEEN. Sweet, and you did me right,
And look you, what my mercy bears to fruit,
Danger and deadly speech and a fresh fault
Before the first was cool in people's lips;
A goodly mercy: and I wash hands of it.—
Speak you, there; have you ever found me sharp?
You weep and whisper with sloped necks and heads
Like two sick birds; do you think shame of me?
Nay, I thank God none can think shame of me;
But am I bitter, think you, to men's faults?
I think I am too merciful, too meek:

Why if I could I would yet save this man;
 'Tis just boy's madness; a soft stripe or two
 Would do to scourge the fault in his French blood.
 I would fain let him go. You, Hamilton,
 You have a heart thewed harder than my heart;
 When mine would threat it sighs, and wrath in it
 Has a bird's flight and station, starves before
 It can well feed or fly: my pulse of wrath
 Sounds tender as the running down of tears.
 You are the hardest woman I have known,
 Your blood has frost and cruel gall in it,
 You hold men off with bitter lips and eyes—
 Such maidens should serve England; now, perfoy,
 I doubt you would have got him slain at once.
 Come, would you not? come, would you let him live?

MARY HAMILTON. Yes—I think yes; I cannot tell;
 maybe

I would have seen him punished.

QUEEN.

Look you now,

There's maiden mercy; I would have him live—
 For all my wifehood maybe I weep too:
 Here's a mere maiden falls to slaying at once,
 Small shrift for her; God keep us from such hearts!
 I am a queen too that would have him live,
 But one that has no wrong and is no queen,
 She would—What are you saying there, you twain?

MARY CARMICHAEL. I saw a queen's face and so
 fair an one's

Would lose no grace for giving grace away;
 That gift comes back upon the mouth it left
 And makes it sweeter, and fresh red on it.

QUEEN. This comes of sonnets when the dance
draws breath;

These talking times will make a dearth of grace.
But you—what ails you that your lips are shut?
Weep, if you will; here are four friends of yours
To weep as fast for pity of your tears.
Do you desire him dead? nay, but men say
He was your friend, he fought them on your side,
He made you songs—God knows what songs he made!
Speak you for him a little: will you not?

MARY BEATON. Madam, I have no words.

QUEEN. No words? no pity—

Have you no mercies for such men? God help!
It seems I am the meekest heart on earth—
Yea, the one tender woman left alive,
And knew it not. I will not let him live,
For all my pity of him.

MARY BEATON. Nay, but, madam,
For God's love look a little to this thing.
If you do slay him you are but shamed to death;
All men will cry upon you, women weep,
Turning your sweet name bitter with their tears;
Red shame grow up out of your memory
And burn his face that would speak well of you;
You shall have no good word nor pity, none,
Till some such end be fallen upon you: nay,
I am but cold, I knew I had no words,
I will keep silence.

QUEEN. Yea now, as I live,
I wist not of it: troth, he shall not die.
See you, I am pitiful, compassionate,
I would not have men slain for my love's sake,

But if he live to do me three times wrong,
 Why then my shame would grow up green and red
 Like any flower. I am not whole at heart;
 In faith, I wot not what such things should be;
 I doubt it is but dangerous; he must die.

MARY BEATON. Yea, but you will not slay him.

QUEEN. Swear me that,

I'll say he shall not die for your oath's sake.

What will you do for grief when he is dead?

MARY BEATON. Nothing for grief, but hold my peace
 and die.

QUEEN. Why, for your sweet sake one might let
 him live;

But the first fault was a green seed of shame,
 And now the flower, and deadly fruit will come
 With apple-time in autumn. By my life,
 I would they had slain him there in Edinburgh;
 But I reprove him; lo the thank I get,
 To set the base folk muttering like smoked bees
 Of shame and love, and how love comes of shame,
 And how the queen loves shame that comes of love;
 Yet I say nought and go about my ways,
 And this mad fellow that I respited
 Being forth and free, lo now the second time
 Ye take him by my bed in wait. Now see
 If I can get goodwill to pardon him;
 With what a face may I crave leave of men
 To respite him, being young and a good knight
 And mad for perfect love? shall I go say,
*Dear lords, because ye took him shamefully,
 Let him not die; because his fault is foul,
 Let him not die; because if he do live*

*I shall be held a harlot of all men,
I pray you, sweet sirs, that he may not die?*

MARY BEATON. Madam, for me I would not have
him live;

Mine own heart's life was ended with my fame,
And my life's breath will shortly follow them;
So that I care not much; for you wot well
I have lost love and shame and fame and all
To no good end; nor while he had his life
Have I got good of him that was my love,
Save that for courtesy (which may God quit)
He kissed me once as one might kiss for love
Out of great pity for me; saving this,
He never did me grace in all his life.

And when you have slain him, madam, it may be
I shall get grace of him in some new way
In a new place, if God have care of us.

QUEEN. Bid you my brother to me presently.
[*Exeunt* MARIES.]

And yet the thing is pitiful; I would
There were some way. To send him overseas,
Out past the long firths to the cold keen sea
Where the sharp sound is that one hears up here—
Or hold him in strong prison till he died—
He would die shortly—or to set him free
And use him softly till his brains were healed—
There is no way. Now never while I live
Shall we twain love together any more
Nor sit at rhyme as we were used to do,
Nor each kiss other only with the eyes
A great way off ere hand or lip could reach;
There is no way.

Enter MURRAY. O, you are welcome, sir;
You know what need I have; but I praise heaven,
Having such need, I have such help of you.
I do believe no queen God ever made
Was better holpen than I look to be.
What, if two brethren love not heartily,
Who shall be good to either one of them?

MURRAY. Madam, I have great joy of your good will.

QUEEN. I pray you, brother, use no courtesies:
I have some fear you will not suffer me
When I shall speak. Fear is a fool, I think,
Yet hath he wit enow to fool my wits,
Being but a woman's. Do not answer me
Till you shall know; yet if you have a word
I shall be fain to hear it; but I think
There is no word to help me; no man's word:
There be two things yet that should do me good,
A speeding arm and a great heart. My lord,
I am soft-spirited as women are,
And ye wot well I have no harder heart:
Yea, with my will I would not slay a thing,
But all should live right sweetly if I might;
So that man's blood-spilling lies hard on me.
I have a work yet for mine honour's sake,
A thing to do, God wot I know not how,
Nor how to crave it of you: nay, by heaven,
I will not shame myself to show it you:
I have not heart.

MURRAY. Why, if it may be done
With any honour, or with good men's excuse,
I shall well do it.

QUEEN. I would I wist that well.
Sir, do you love me?

MURRAY. Yea, you know I do.

QUEEN. In faith, you should well love me, for I
love
The least man in your following for your sake
With a whole sister's heart.

MURRAY. Speak simply, madam;
I must obey you, being your bounden man.

QUEEN. Sir, so it is you know what things have
been,
Even to the endangering of mine innocent name,
And by no fault, but by men's evil will;
If Chastelard have trial openly,
I am but shamed.

MURRAY. This were a wound indeed,
If your good name should lie upon his lip.

QUEEN. I will the judges put him not to plead,
For my fame's sake; he shall not answer them.

MURRAY. What, think you he will speak against
your fame?

QUEEN. I know not; men might feign belief of him
For hate of me; it may be he will speak;
In brief, I will not have him held to proof.

MURRAY. Well, if this be, what good is to be done?

QUEEN. Is there no way but he must speak to them,
Being had to trial plainly?

MURRAY. I think, none.

QUEEN. Now mark, my lord; I swear he will not
speak.

MURRAY. It were the best if you could make that
sure.

QUEEN. There is one way. Look, sir, he shall not do it:

Shall not, or will not, either is one way;
I speak as I would have you understand.

MURRAY. Let me not guess at you; speak certainly.

QUEEN. You will not mind me: let him be removed;
Take means to get me surety: there be means.

MURRAY. So, in your mind, I have to slay the man?

QUEEN. Is there a mean for me to save the man?

MURRAY. Truly I see no mean except your love.

QUEEN. What love is that, my lord? what think you of,

Talking of love and of love's mean in me

And of your guesses and of slaying him?

Why, I say nought, have nought to say: God help me!

I bid you but take surety of the man,

Get him removed.

MURRAY. Come, come, be clear with me;
You bid me to despatch him privily.

QUEEN. God send me sufferance! I bid you, sir?
Nay, do not go: what matter if I did?

Nathless I never bade you; no, by God.

Be not so wroth; you are my brother born;

Why do you dwell upon me with such eyes?

For love of God you should not bear me hard.

MURRAY. What, are you made of flesh?

QUEEN. O, now I see

You had rather lose your wits to do me harm

Than keep sound wits to help me.

MURRAY. It is right strange;

The worst man living hath the fear, some love,

Holds somewhat dear a little for life's sake,

Keeps fast to some compassion; you have none;
You know of nothing that remembrance knows
To make you tender. I must slay the man?
Nay, I will do it.

QUEEN. Do, if you be not mad.

I am sorry for him; and he must needs die.
I would I were assured you hate me not:
I have no heart to slay him by my will.
I pray you think not bitterly of me.

MURRAY. Is it your pleasure such a thing were done?

QUEEN. Yea, by God's body is it, certainly.

MURRAY. Nay, for your love then, and for honour's
sake,

This thing must be.

QUEEN. Yea, should I set you on?

Even for my love then, I beseech you, sir,
To seek him out, and lest he prate of me
To put your knife into him ere he come forth:
Meseems this were not such wild work to do.

MURRAY. I'll have him in the prison taken off.

QUEEN. I am bounden to you, even for my name's
sake,

When that is done.

MURRAY. I pray you fear me not.

Farewell. I would such things were not to do,
Or not for me; yea, not for any man. [*Exit.*]

QUEEN. Alas, what honour have I to give thanks?
I would he had denied me: I had held my peace
Thenceforth for ever; but he wrung out the word,
Caught it before my lip, was fain of it—
It was his fault to put it in my mind,
Yea, and to feign a loathing of his fault,

Now is he about devising my love's death,
 And nothing loth. Nay, since he must needs die,
 Would he were dead and come alive again
 And I might keep him safe. He doth live now
 And I may do what love I will to him;
 But by to-morrow he will be stark dead,
 Stark slain and dead; and for no sort of love
 Will he so much as kiss me half a kiss.
 Were this to do I would not do it again.

Re-enter MURRAY.

What, have you taken order? is it done?

It were impossible to do so soon.

Nay, answer me.

MURRAY.

Madam, I will not do it.

QUEEN. How did you say? I pray, sir, speak again:
 I know not what you said.

MURRAY.

I say I will not;

I have thought thereof, and have made up my heart
 To have no part in this: look you to it.

QUEEN. O, for God's sake! you will not have me
 shamed?

MURRAY. I will not dip my hand into your sin.

QUEEN. It were a good deed to deliver me;

I am but woman, of one blood with you,

A feeble woman; put me not to shame;

I pray you of your pity do me right.

Yea, and no fleck of blood shall cleave to you

For a just deed.

MURRAY.

I know not: I will none.

QUEEN. O, you will never let him speak to them

To put me in such shame? would I should die

Out of pure shame and mine own burning blood;

Yea, my face feels the shame lay hold on it,
I am half burnt already in my thought;
Take pity of me. Think how shame slays a man;
How shall I live then? would you have me dead?
I pray you for our dead dear father's sake,
Let not men mock at me. Nay, if he speak,
I shall be sung in mine own towns. Have pity.
What, will you let men stone me in the ways?

MURRAY. Madam, I shall take pains the best I may
To save your honour, and what thing lieth in me
That will I do, but no close manslayings.
I will not have God's judgment gripe my throat
When I am dead, to hale me into hell
For a man's sake slain on this wise. Take heed.
See you to that. [*Exit.*

QUEEN. One of you maidens there
Bid my lord hither. Now by Mary's soul,
He shall not die and bring me into shame.
There's treason in you like a fever, hot,
My holy-natured brother, cheek and eye:
You look red through with it: sick, honour-sick,
Specked with the blain of treason, leper-like—
A scrupulous fair traitor with clean lips—
If one should sue to hell to do him good
He were as brotherly holpen as I am.
This man must live and say no harm of me;
I may reprieve and cast him forth; yea, so—
This were the best; or if he die midway—
Yea, anything, so that he die not here.

[*To the MARIES within.*]
Fetch hither Darnley. Nay, ye gape on me—
What, doth he sleep, or feeds, or plays at games?

Why, I would see him; I am weary for his sake;
Bid my lord in.—Nathless he will but chide;
Nay, flee and laugh: what should one say to him?
There were some word if one could hit on it;
Some way to close with him: I wot not.—Sir,

Enter DARNLEY.

Please it your love I have a suit to you.

DARNLEY. What sort of suit?

QUEEN. Nay, if you be not friends—
I have no suit towards mine enemies.

DARNLEY. Eh, do I look now like your enemy?

QUEEN. You have a way of peering under brow
I do not like. If you see anything
In me that irks you I will painfully
Labour to lose it: do but show me favour,
And as I am your faithful humble wife
This foolishness shall be removed in me.

DARNLEY. Why do you laugh and mock me with
stretched hands?

Faith, I see no such thing.

QUEEN.

That is well seen.

Come, I will take my heart between my lips,
Use it not hardly. Sir, my suit begins;
That you would please to make me that I am,
(In sooth I think I am) mistress and queen
Of mine own people.

DARNLEY.

Why, this is no suit;

This is a simple matter, and your own.

QUEEN. It was, before God made you king of me.

DARNLEY. No king, by God's grace; were I such a
king

I'd sell my kingdom for six roods of rye.

QUEEN. You are too sharp upon my words; I would
Have leave of you to free a man condemned.

DARNLEY. What man is that, sweet?

QUEEN. Such a mad poor man
As God desires us use not cruelly.

DARNLEY. Is there no name a man may call him by?

QUEEN. Nay, my fair master, what fair game is this?
Why, you do know him, it is Chastelard.

DARNLEY. Aye, is it soothly?

QUEEN. By my life, it is;
Sweet, as you tender me, so pardon him.

DARNLEY. As he doth tender you, so pardon me;
For if it were the mean to save my life
He should not live a day.

QUEEN. Nay, shall not he?

DARNLEY. Look what an evil wit old Fortune hath:
Why, I came here to get his time cut off.
This second fault is meat for lewd men's mouths;
You were best have him slain at once: 'tis hot.

QUEEN. Give me the warrant, and sit down, my lord.
Why, I will sign it; what, I understand
How this must be. Should not my name stand here?

DARNLEY. Yea, there, and here the seal.

QUEEN. Aye, so you say.
Shall I say too what I am thinking of?

DARNLEY. Do, if you will.

QUEEN. I do not like your suit.

DARNLEY. 'Tis of no Frenchman fashion.

QUEEN. No, God wot;
'Tis nowise great men's fashion in French land
To clap a headsman's taberd on their backs.

DARNLEY. No, madam?

QUEEN. No; I never wist of that.
 Is it a month gone I did call you lord?
 I chose you by no straying stroke of sight,
 But with my heart to love you heartily.
 Did I wrong then? did mine eye draw my heart?
 I know not; sir, it may be I did wrong:
 And yet to see you I should call it right
 Even yet to love you; and would choose again,
 Again to choose you.

DARNLEY. There, I love you too;
 Take that for sooth, and let me take this hence.

QUEEN. O, do you think I hold you off with words?
 Why, take it then; there is my handwriting,
 And here the hand that you shall slay him with.
 'Tis a fair hand, a maiden-coloured one:
 I doubt yet it has never slain a man.
 You never fought yet save for game, I wis.
 Nay, thank me not, but have it from my sight;
 Go and make haste for fear he be got forth:
 It may be such a man is dangerous;
 Who knows what friends he hath? and by my faith
 I doubt he hath seen some fighting, I do fear
 He hath fought and shed men's blood; ye are wise men
 That will not leave such dangerous things alive;
 'Twere well he died the sooner for your sakes.
 Pray you make haste; it is not fit he live.

DARNLEY. What, will you let him die so easily?

QUEEN. Why, God have mercy! what way should
 one take
 To please such people? there's some cunning way,
 Something I miss, out of my simple soul.
 What, must one say "Beseech you do no harm,"

Or "for my love, sweet cousins, be not hard,"
Or "let him live but till the vane come round"—
Will such things please you? well then, have your way;
Sir, I desire you, kneeling down with tears,
With sighs and tears, fair sir, require of you,
Considering of my love I bear this man,
Just for my love's sake let him not be hanged
Before the sundown; do thus much for me,
To have a queen's prayers follow after you.

DARNLEY. I know no need for you to gibe at me.

QUEEN. Alack, what heart then shall I have to jest?
There is no woman jests in such a wise—
*For the shame's sake I pray you hang him not,
Seeing how I love him, save indeed in silk,
Sweet twisted silk of my sad handiwork.*
Nay, and you will not do so much for me;
You vex your lip, biting the blood and all:
Were this so hard, and you compassionate?
I am in sore case then, and will weep indeed.

DARNLEY. What do you mean to cast such gibes
at me?

QUEEN. Woe's me, and will you turn my tears to
thorns?

Nay, set your eyes a little in my face:
See, do I weep? what will you make of me?
Will you not swear I love this prisoner?
Ye are wise, and ye will have it; yet for me
I wist not of it. We are but feeble fools,
And love may catch us when we lie asleep
And yet God knows we know not this a whit.
Come, look on me, swear you believe it not:
It may be I will take your word for that.

DARNLEY. Do you not love him? nay, but verily?

QUEEN. Now then, make answer to me verily,
Which of us twain is wiser? for my part
I will not swear I love not, if you will;
Ye be wise men and many men, my lords,
And ye will have me love him, ye will swear
That I do love him; who shall say ye lie?
Look on your paper; maybe I have wept:
Doubtless I love your hanged man in my heart.
What, is the writing smutched or gone awry?
Or blurred—aye, surely so much—with one tear,
One little sharp tear strayed on it by chance?
Come, come, the man is deadly dangerous;
Let him die presently.

DARNLEY. You do not love him;
Well, yet he need not die; it were right hard
To hang the fool because you love him not.

QUEEN. You have keen wits and thereto courtesy
To catch me with. No, let this man not die;
It were no such perpetual praise to you
To be his doomsman and in doglike wise
Bite his brief life in twain.

DARNLEY. Truly it were not.

QUEEN. Then for your honour and my love of you
(Oh, I do love you! but you know not, sweet,
You shall see how much), think you for their sake
He may go free?

DARNLEY. How, freely forth of us?
But yet he loves you, and being mad with love
Makes matter for base mouths to chew upon:
'Twere best he live not yet.

QUEEN. Will you say that?

DARNLEY. Why should he live to breed you bad
reports
Let him die first.

QUEEN. Sweet, for your sake, not so.

DARNLEY. Fret not yourself to pity; let him die.

QUEEN. Come, let him live a little; it shall be
A grace to us.

DARNLEY. By God he dies at once.

QUEEN. Now, by God's mother, if I respite him,
Though you were all the race of you in one
And had more tongues than hairs to cry on me
He should not lose a hair.

DARNLEY. This is mere mercy—
But you thank God you love him not a whit?

QUEEN. It shall be what it please; and if I please
It shall be anything. Give me the warrant.

DARNLEY. Nay, for your sake and love of you,
not I,
To make it dangerous.

QUEEN. O, God's pity, sir!
You are tender of me; will you serve me so,
Against mine own will, shew me so much love,
Do me good service that I loath being done,
Out of pure pity?

DARNLEY. Nay, your word shall stand.

QUEEN. What makes you gape so beastlike after
blood?

Were you not bred up on some hangman's hire
And dieted with fleshmeats at his hand
And fed into a fool? Give me that paper.

DARNLEY. Now for that word I will not.

QUEEN. Nay, sweet love,

For your own sake be just a little wise;
Come, I beseech you.

DARNLEY. Pluck not at my hands.

QUEEN. No, that I will not: I am brain-broken, mad;
Pity my madness for sweet marriage-sake
And my great love's; I love you to say this;
I would not have you cross me, out of love.
But for true love should I not chafe indeed?
And now I do not.

DARNLEY. Yea, and late you chid,
You chafed and jested and blew soft and hard—
No, for that "fool" you shall not fool me so.

QUEEN. You are no churl, sweet, will you see me
weep?

Look, I weep now; be friends with my poor tears.
Think each of them beseeches you of love
And hath some tongue to cry on you for love
And speak soft things; for that which loves not you
Is none of mine, not though they grow of grief
And grief of you; be not too hard with them.
You would not of your own heart slay a man;
Nay, if you will, in God's name make me weep,
I will not hate you; but at heart, sweet lord,
Be not at heart my sweet heart's enemy.
If I had many mighty men to friend
I would not plead too lovingly with you
To have your love.

DARNLEY. Why, yet you have my love.

QUEEN. Alas, what shall mine enemies do to me
If I be used so hardly of my friends?
Come, sir, you hate me; yet . . . all your hate
You cannot have such heart.

DARNLEY.

What sort of heart?

I have no heart to be used shamefully

If you mean that.

QUEEN.

Would God I loved you not;

You are too hard to be used lovingly.

DARNLEY. You are moved too much for such a little love

As you bear me.

QUEEN.

God knows you do me wrong;

God knows the heart, sweet, that I love you with.

Hark you, fair sir, I'd have all well with you;

Do you not fear at sick men's time of night

What end may come? are you so sure of heart?

Is not your spirit surprisable in sleep?

Have you no evil dreams? Nay, look you, love,

I will not be flung off you heart and hand,

I am no snake: but tell me for your love

Have you no fancies how these things will end

In the pit's mouth? how all life-deeds will look

At the grave's edge that lets men into hell?

For my part, who am weak and woman-eyed,

It turns my soul to tears: I doubt this blood

Fallen on our faces when we twain are dead

Will scar and burn them: yea, for heaven is sweet.

And loves sweet deeds that smell not of spilt blood.

Let us not kill: God that made mercy first

Pities the pitiful for their deed's sake.

DARNLEY. Get you some painting; with a cheek
like this

You'll find no faith in listeners.

QUEEN.

How, fair lord?

DARNLEY. I say that looking with this face of yours

None shall believe you holy; what, you talk,
 Take mercy in your mouth, eat holiness,
 Put God under your tongue and feed on heaven,
 With fear and faith and—faith, I know not what—
 And look as though you stood and saw men slain
 To make you game and laughter: nay, your eyes
 Threaten as unto blood. What will you do
 To make men take your sweet word? pitiful—
 You are pitiful as he that's hired for death
 And loves the slaying yet better than the hire.

QUEEN. You are wise that live to threat and tell
 me so;

Do you love life too much?

DARNLEY. O, now you are sweet,
 Right tender now: you love not blood nor death,
 You are too tender.

QUEEN. Yea, too weak, too soft:
 Sweet, do not mock me, for my love's sake; see
 How soft a thing I am. Will you be hard?
 The heart you have, has it no sort of fear?

DARNLEY. Take off your hand and let me go my
 way

And do my deed, and when the doing is past
 I will come home and teach you tender things
 Out of my love till you forget my wrath.
 I will be angry when I see good need,
 And will grow gentle after, fear not that;
 You shall get no wrong of my wrongdoing.
 So I take leave.

QUEEN. Take what you will; take all;
 You have taken half my heart away with words:
 Take all I have, and take no leave; I have

No leave to give: yea, shortly shall lack leave,
I think, to live; but I crave none of you;
I would have none: yet for the love I have,
If I get ever a mean to show it you,
I pray God put you some day in my hand
That you may take that too.

DARNLEY.

Well, as he please;

God keep you in such love; and so farewell. [*Exit.*]

QUEEN. So fare I as your lover, but not well.—

Ah sweet, if God be ever good to me
To put you in my hand! I am come to shame;
Let me think now, and let my wits not go;
God, for dear mercy, let me not forget
Why I should be so angry; the dull blood
Beats at my face and blinds me—I am chafed to death,
And I am shamed; I shall go mad and die.
Truly I think I did kneel down, did pray,
Yea, weep (who knows?) it may be—all for that.
Yea, if I wept not, this was blood brake forth
And burnt mine eyelids; I will have blood back,
And wash them cool in the hottest of his heart,
Or I will slay myself: I cannot tell:
I have given gold for brass, and lo the pay
Cleaves to my fingers: there's no way to mend—
Not while life stays: would God that it were gone!
The fool will feed upon my fame and laugh;
Till one seal up his tongue and lips with blood,
He carries half my honour and good name
Between his teeth. Lord God, mine head will fail!
When have I done thus since I was alive?
And these ill times will deal but ill with me—
My old love slain, and never a new to help,

And my wits gone, and my blithe use of life,
And all the grace was with me. Love—perchance
If I save love I shall well save myself.
I could find heart to bid him take such fellows
And kill them to my hand. I was the fool
To sue to these and shame myself: God knows
I was a queen born, I will hold their heads
Here in my hands for this. Which of you waits?

Enter MARY BEATON and MARY CARMICHAEL.

No maiden of them?—what, no more than this?

MARY CARMICHAEL. Madam, the lady Seyton is gone
forth;

She is ill at heart with watching.

QUEEN.

Aye, at heart—

All girls must have such tender sides to the heart
They break for one night's watching, ache to death
For an hour's pity, for a half-hour's love—
Wear out before the watches, die by dawn,
And ride at noon to burial. God's my pity!
Where's Hamilton? doth she ail too? at heart,
I warrant her at heart.

MARY BEATON.

I know not, madam.

QUEEN. What, sick or dead? I am well holpen of
you;

Come hither to me. What pale blood you have—
Is it for fear you turn such cheeks to me?
Why, if I were so loving, by my hand,
I would have set my head upon the chance,
And loosed him though I died. What will you do?
Have you no way?

MARY BEATON. None but your mercy.

QUEEN,

Aye?

Why then the thing is piteous. Think, for God's sake—
Is there no loving way to fetch him forth?
Nay, what a white thin-blooded thing is love,
To help no more than this doth! Were I in love,
I would unbar the ways to-night and then
Laugh death to death to-morrow, mock him dead;
I think you love well with one half your heart,
And let fear keep the other. Hark you now,
You said there was some friend durst break my bars—
Some Scotch name—faith, as if I wist of it!
Ye have such heavy wits to help one with—
Some man that had some mean to save him by—
Tush, I must be at pains for you!

MARY BEATON.

Nay, madam,

It were no boot; he will not be let forth.

QUEEN. I say, the name. O, Robert Erskine—yea,
A fellow of some heart: what saith he?

MARY BEATON.

Madam,

The thing was sound all through, yea, all went well,
But for all prayers that we could make to him
He would not fly: we cannot get him forth.

QUEEN. Great God! that men should have such
wits as this!

I have a mind to let him die for that;
And yet I wot not. Said he, he loathed his life?

MARY BEATON. He says your grace given would
scathe yourself,

And little grace for such a grace as that
Be with the little of his life he kept
To cast off some time more unworthily.

QUEEN. God help me! what should wise folk do
with him?

These men be weaker-witted than mere fools
When they fall mad once; yet by Mary's soul
I am sorrier for him than for men right wise.
God wot a fool that were more wise than he
Would love me something worse than Chastelard,
Aye, and his own soul better. Do you think
(There's no such other sort of fool alive)
That he may live?

MARY BEATON. Yea, by God's mercy, madam,
To your great praise and honour from all men
If you should keep him living.

QUEEN. By God's light,
I have good will to do it. Are you sure,
If I would pack him with a pardon hence,
He would speak well of me—not hint and halt,
Smile and look back, sigh and say love runs out,
But times have been—with some loose laugh cut short,
Bit off at lip—eh?

MARY BEATON. No, by heaven he would not.

QUEEN. You know how quickly one may be belied—
Faith, you should know it—I never thought the worst,
One may touch love and come with clean hands off—
But you should know it. What, he will not fly—
Not though I wink myself asleep, turn blind—
Which that I will I say not?

MARY BEATON. Nay, not he;
We had good hope to bring him well aboard,
Let him slip safe down by the firths to sea,
Out under Leith by night-setting, and thence
Take ship for France and serve there out of sight
In the new wars.

QUEEN. Aye, in the new French wars—

You wist thereof too, madam, with good leave—
A goodly bait to catch mine honour with
And let me wake up with my name bit through.
I had been much bounden to you twain, methinks,
But for my knight's sake and his love's; by God,
He shall not die in God's despite nor mine.
Call in our chief lords; bid one see to it:
Aye, and make haste.

[*Exeunt* MARY BEATON and MARY CARMICHAEL.]

Now shall I try their teeth:

I have done with fear; now nothing but pure love
And power and pity shall have part in me;
I will not throw them such a spirit in flesh
To make their prey on. Though he be mad indeed,
It is the goodliest madness ever smote
Upon man's heart. A kingly knight—in faith,
Meseems my face can yet make faith in men
And break their brains with beauty: for a word,
An eyelid's twitch, an eye's turn, tie them fast
And make their souls cleave to me. God be thanked,
This air has not yet curdled all the blood
That went to make me fair. An hour ago,
I thought I had been forgotten of men's love
More than dead women's faces are forgot
Of after lovers. All men are not of earth:
For all the frost of fools and this cold land
There be some yet catch fever of my face
And burning for mine eyes' sake. I did think
My time was gone when men would dance to death
As to a music, and lie laughing down
In the grave and take their funerals for their feasts,
To get one kiss of me. I have some strength yet,

Though I lack power on men that lack men's blood.
Yea, and God wot I will be merciful;
For all the foolish hardness round my heart
That tender women miss of to their praise,
They shall not say but I had grace to give
Even for love's sake. Why, let them take their way:
What ails it them though I be soft or hard?
Soft hearts would weep and weep and let men die
For very mercy and sweet-heartedness;
I that weep little for my pity's sake,
I have the grace to save men. Let fame go—
I care not much what shall become of fame,
So I save love and do mine own soul right;
I'll have my mercy help me to revenge
On all the crew of them. How will he look,
Having my pardon! I shall have sweet thanks
And love of good men for my mercy's love—
Yea, and be quit of these I hate to death,
With one good deed.

Enter the MARIES.

MARY BEATON. Madam, the lords are here.

QUEEN Stand you about me, I will speak to them.
I would the whole world stood up in my face
And heard what I shall say. Bid them come in.

*Enter MURRAY, RANDOLPH, MORTON, LINDSAY, and
other Lords.*

Hear you, fair lords, I have a word to you;
There is one thing I would fain understand—
If I be queen or no; for by my life
Methinks I am growing unqueenly. No man speak?
Pray you take note, sweet lord, ambassador,
I am no queen: I never was born queen;

Alack, that one should fool us in this wise!
Take up my crown, sir, I will none of it
Till it hath bells on as a fool's cap hath.
Nay, who will have it? no man take it up?
Was there none worthy to be shamed but I?
Here are enow good faces, good to crown;
Will you be king, fair brother? or you, my lord?
Give me a spinner's curch, a wisp of reed,
Any mean thing; but, God's love, no more gold,
And no more shame: let boys throw dice for it,
Or cast it to the grooms for tennis-play,
For I will none.

MURRAY. What would your highness have?

QUEEN. Yea, yea, I said I was no majesty;
I shall be shortly fallen out of grace.
What would I have? I would have leave to live;
Perchance I shall not shortly: nay, for me
That have no leave to respite other lives
To keep mine own life were small praise enow.

MURRAY. Your majesty hath power to respite men,
As we well wot; no man saith otherwise.

QUEEN. What, is this true? 'tis a thing wonderful—
So great I cannot be well sure of it.
Strange that a queen should find such grace as this
At such lords' hands as ye be, such great lords:
I pray you let me get assured again,
Lest I take jest for truth and shame myself
And make you mirth: to make your mirth of me,
God wot it were small pains to you, my lords,
But much less honour. I may send reprieve—
With your sweet leaves I may?

MURRAY.

Assuredly.

QUEEN. Lo, now, what grace is this I have of you!
I had a will to respite Chastelard,
And would not do it for very fear of you:
Look you, I wist not ye were merciful.

MORTON. Madam—

QUEEN. My lord, you have a word to me?
Doth it displease you such a man should live?

MORTON. 'Twere a mad mercy in your majesty
To lay no hand upon his second fault
And let him thrice offend you.

QUEEN. Aye, my lord?

MORTON. It were well done to muffle lewd men's
mouths

By casting of his head into their laps:
It were much best.

QUEEN. Yea, truly were it so?

But if I will not, yet I will not, sir,
For all the mouths in Scotland. Now, by heaven,
As I am pleased he shall not die, but live,
So shall ye be. There is no man shall die,
Except it please me; and no man shall say,
Except it please me, if I do ill or well.
Which of you now will set his will to mine?
Not you, nor you I think, nor none of you,
Nor no man living that loves living well.
Let one stand forth and smite me with his hand,
Wring my crown off and cast it underfoot,
And he shall get my respite back of me,
And no man else: he shall bid live or die.
And no man else; and he shall be my lord,
And no man else. What, will not one be king?
Will not one here lay hold upon my state?

I am queen of you for all things come and gone.
Nay, my chief lady, and no meaner one,
The chiefest of my maidens, shall bear this
And give it to my prisoner for a grace;
Who shall deny me? who shall do me wrong?
Bear greeting to the lord of Chastelard,
And this withal for respite of his life,
For by my head he shall die no such way:
Nay, sweet, no words, but hence and back again.

[*Exit* MARY BEATON.]

Farewell, dear lords; ye have shown grace to me,
And some time I will thank you as I may;
Till when think well of me and what is done.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.
CHASTELARD.

SCENE I.—*Before Holyrood. A crowd of people; among them Soldiers, Burgesses, a Preacher, &c.*

1ST CITIZEN. They are not out yet. Have you seen
the man?

What manner of man?

2ND CITIZEN. Shall he be hanged or no?

There was a fellow hanged some three days gone
Wept the whole way: think you this man shall die
In better sort, now?

1ST CITIZEN. Eh, these shawm-players

That walk before strange women and make songs!
How should they die well?

3RD CITIZEN. Is it sooth men say

Our dame was wont to kiss him on the face
In lewd folk's sight?

1ST CITIZEN. Ye, saith one, all day long

He used to sit and jangle words in rhyme
To suit with shakes of faint adulterous sound
Some French lust in men's ears; she made songs too,
Soft things to feed sin's amore — mouth upon—
Delicate sounds for dancing at in hell.

4TH CITIZEN. Is it priest Black that he shall have
by him
When they do come?

3RD CITIZEN. Ah! by God's leave, not so;
If the knave show us his peeled onion's head
And that damned flagging jowl of his—

2ND CITIZEN. Nay, sirs,
Take heed of words; moreover, please it you,
This man hath no pope's part in him.

3RD CITIZEN. I say
That if priest whore's-friend with the lewd thief's cheek
Show his foul blinking face to shame all ours,
It goes back fouler; well, one day hell's fire
Will burn him black indeed.

A WOMAN. What kind of man?
'Tis yet great pity of him if he be
Goodly enow for this queen's paramour.
A French lord overseas? what doth he here,
With Scotch folk here?

1ST CITIZEN. Fair mistress, I think well
He doth so at some times that I were fain
To do as well.

THE WOMAN. Nay, then he will not die.

1ST CITIZEN. Why, see you, if one eat a piece of
bread

Baked as it were a certain prophet's way,
Not upon coals, now—you shall apprehend—
If defiled bread be given a man to eat,
Being thrust into his mouth, why he shall eat,
And with good hap shall eat; but if now, say,
One steal this, bread and beastliness and all,
When scarcely for pure hunger flesh and bone

Cleave one to other—why, if he steal to eat,
Be it even the filthiest feeding—though the man
Be famine-flayed of flesh and skin, I say
He shall be hanged.

3RD CITIZEN. Nay, stolen said you, sir?
See, God bade eat abominable bread,
And freely was it eaten—for a sign
This, for a sign—and doubtless as did God,
So may the devil; bid one eat freely and live,
Not for a sign.

2ND CITIZEN. Will you think thus of her?
But wherefore should they get this fellow slain
If he be clear toward her?

3RD CITIZEN. Sir, one must see
The day comes when a woman sheds her sin
As a bird moults; and she being shifted so,
The old mate of her old feather pecks at her
To get the right bird back; then she being stronger
Picks out his eyes—eh?

2ND CITIZEN. Like enough to be;
But if it be—Is not one preaching there
With certain folk about him?

1ST CITIZEN. Yea, the same
Who preached a month since from Ezekiel
Concerning these twain—this our queen that is
And her that was, and is not now so much
As queen over hell's worm.

3RD CITIZEN. Aye, said he not,
This was Aholah, the first one of these,
Called sisters only for a type—being twain,
Twain Maries, no whit Nazar — the first
Bred out of Egypt like the water-worm

With sides in wet green places baked with slime
And festered flesh that steams against the sun;
A plague among all people, and a type
Set as a flake upon a leper's fell.

1ST CITIZEN. Yea, said he, and unto her the men
went in,

The men of Pharaoh's, beautiful with red
And with red gold, fair foreign-footed men,
The bountiful fair men, the courteous men,
The delicate men with delicate feet, that went
Curling their small beards Agag-fashion, yea
Pruning their mouths to nibble words behind
With pecking at God's skirts—small broken oaths
Fretted to shreds between most dainty lips,
And underbreath some praise of Ashtaroth
Sighed laughingly.

2ND CITIZEN. Was he not under guard
For the good word?

1ST CITIZEN. Yea, but now forth again—
And of the latter said he—there being two,
The first Aholah, which interpreted—

3RD CITIZEN. But, of this latter?

1ST CITIZEN. Well, of her he said
How she made letters for Chaldean folk
And men that came forth of the wilderness
And all her sister's chosen men; yea, she
Kept not her lip from any sin of hers
But multiplied in whoredoms toward all these
That hate God mightily; for these, he saith,
These are the fair French people, and these her kin
Sought out of England with her love-letters
To bring them to her kiss of love; and thus

With a prayer made that God would break such love
 Ended some while; then crying out for strong wrath
 Spake with a great voice after: This is she,
 Yea the lewd woman, yea the same woman
 That gat bruised breasts in Egypt, when strange men
 Swart from great suns, foot-burnt with angry soils
 And strewn with sand of gaunt Chaldean miles,
 Poured all their love upon her: she shall drink
 The Lord's cup of derision that is filled
 With drunkenness and sorrow, great of sides
 And deep to drink in till the dreg drips out:
 Yea, and herself with the twain shards thereof
 Pluck off her breasts; so said he.

4TH CITIZEN.

See that stir—

Are not they come?

3RD CITIZEN.

There wants an hour of them.

Draw near and let us hearken; he will speak

Surely some word of this.

2ND CITIZEN.

What saith he now?

THE PREACHER. The mercy of a harlot is a sword
 And her mouth sharper than a flame of fire.

SCENE II.—*In Prison.*

CHASTELARD. So here my time shuts up; and the
 last light

Has made the last shade in the world for me.

The sunbeam that was narrow like a leaf

Has turned a hand, and the hand stretched to an arm,

And the arm has reached to dust on the floor, and
 made

A maze of motes with paddling fingers. Well,
I knew not that a man so sure to die
Could care so little; a bride-night's lustiness
Leaps in my veins as light fire under a wind:
As if I felt a kindling beyond death
Of some new joys far outside of me yet;
Sweet sound, sweet smell and touch of things far out
Sure to come soon. I wonder will death be
Even all it seems now? or the talk of hell
And wretched changes of the worn-out soul
Nailed to decaying flesh, shall that be true?
Or is this like the forethought of deep sleep
Felt by a tired man? Sleep were good enough—
Shall sleep be all? But I shall not forget
For any sleep this love bound upon me—
For any sleep or quiet ways of death.
Ah, in my weary dusty space of sight
Her face will float with heavy scents of hair
And fire of subtle amorous eyes, and lips
More hot than wine, full of sweet wicked words
Babbled against mine own lips, and long hands
Spread out, and pale bright throat and pale bright
breasts,
Fit to make all men mad. I do believe
This fire shall never quite burn out to the ash
And leave no heat and flame upon my dust
For witness where a man's heart was burnt up.
For all Christ's work this Venus is not quelled,
But reddens at the mouth with blood of men,
Sucking between small teeth the sap o' the veins,
Dabbling with death her little tender lips—
A bitter beauty, poisonous-pearled mouth.

I am not fit to live but for love's sake,
 So I were best die shortly. Ah, fair love,
 Fair fearful Venus made of deadly foam,
 I shall escape you somehow with my death—
 Your splendid supple body and mouth on fire
 And Paphian breath that bites the lips with heat.
 I had best die.

Enter MARY BEATON.

What, is my death's time come,
 And you the friend to make death kind to me?
 'Tis sweetly done; for I was sick for this.

MARY BEATON. Nay, but see here; nay, for you
 shall not die:

She has reprieved you; look, her name to that,
 A present respite; I was sure of her:
 You are quite safe: here, take it in your hands:
 I am faint with the end of pain. Read there.

CHASTELARD.

Reprieve?

Wherefore reprieve? Who has done this to me?

MARY BEATON. I never feared but God would have
 you live,

Or I knew well God must have punished me;
 But I feared nothing, had no sort of fear.
 What makes you stare upon the seal so hard?
 Will you not read now?

CHASTELARD.

A reprieve of life—

Reprieving me from living. Nay, by God,
 I count one death a bitter thing enough.

MARY BEATON. See what she writes; your love; for
 love of you;
 Out of her love; a word to save your life:

But I knew this too though you love me not:
She is your love; I knew that: yea, by heaven.

CHASTELARD. You knew I had to live and be re-
prieved:
Say I were bent to die now?

MARY BEATON. Do not die,
For her sweet love's sake; not for pity of me,
You would not bear with life for me one hour;
But for hers only.

CHASTELARD. Nay, I love you well,
I would not hurt you for more lives than one.
But for this fair-faced paper of reprieve,
We'll have no riddling to make death shift sides:
Look, here ends one of us. [*Tearing it.*]

For her I love,
She will not anger heaven with slaying me;
For me, I am well quit of loving her;
For you, I pray you be well comforted.
Seeing in my life no man gat good by me
And by my death no hurt is any man's.

MARY BEATON. And I that loved you? nay, I loved
you; nay,
Why should your like be pitied when they love?
Her hard heart is not yet so hard as yours,
Nor God's hard heart. I care not if you die.
These bitter madmen are not fit to live.
I will not have you touch me, speak to me,
Not take farewell of you. See you die well,
Or death will play with shame for you, and win,
And laugh you out of life. I am right glad
I never am to see you any more,

For I should come to hate you easily;
I would not have you live.

[*Exit.*

CHASTELARD.

She has cause enow.

I would this wretched waiting had an end,
For I wax feebler than I was: God knows
I had a mind once to have saved this flesh
And made life one with shame. It marvels me
This girl that loves me should desire so much
To have me sleep with shame for bedfellow
A whole life's space; she would be glad to die
To escape such life. It may be too her love
Is but an amorous quarrel with herself,
Not love of me but her own wilful soul;
Then she will live and be more glad of this
Than girls of their own will and their heart's love
Before love mars them: so God go with her!
For mine own love—I wonder will she come
Sad at her mouth a little, with drawn cheeks
And eyelids wrinkled up? or hot and quick
To lean her head on mine and leave her lips
Deep in my neck? For surely she must come;
And I should fare the better to be sure
What she will do. But as it please my sweet;
For some sweet thing she must do if she come,
Seeing how I have to die. Now three years since
This had not seemed so good an end for me;
But in some wise all things wear round betimes
And wind up well. Yet doubtless she might take
A will to come my way and hold my hands
And kiss me some three kisses, throat, mouth, eyes,
And say some soft three words to soften death:
I do not see how this should break her ease.

Nay, she will come to get her warrant back:
By this no doubt she is sorely penitent,
Her fit of angry mercy well blown out
And her wits cool again. She must have chafed
A great while through for anger to become
So like pure pity; they must have fretted her
Nigh mad for anger: or it may be mistrust,
She is so false; yea, to my death I think
She will not trust me; alas the hard sweet heart!
As if my lips could hurt her any way
But by too keenly kissing of her own.
Ah false poor sweet fair lips that keep no faith,
They shall not catch mine false or dangerous;
They must needs kiss me one good time, albeit
They love me not at all. Lo, here she comes,
For the blood leaps and catches at my face;
There go her feet and tread upon my heart;
Now shall I see what way I am to die.

Enter the QUEEN.

QUEEN. What, is one here? Speak to me for
God's sake:
Where are you lain?

CHASTELARD. Here, madam, at your hand.

QUEEN. Sweet lord, what sore pain have I had for
you
And been most patient!—Nay, you are not bound.
If you be gentle to me, take my hand.
Do you not hold me the worst heart in the world?
Nay, you must needs; but say not yet you do.
I am worn so weak I know not how I live:
Reach me your hand.

CHASTELARD. Take comfort and good heart;

All will find end; this is some grief to you,
But you shall overlive it. Come, fair love;
Be of fair cheer; I say you have done no wrong.

QUEEN. I will not be of cheer: I have done a thing
That will turn fire and burn me. Tell me not;
If you will do me comfort, whet your sword.
But if you hate me, tell me of soft things,
For I hate these, and bitterly. Look up;
Am I not mortal to be gazed upon?

CHASTELARD. Yes, mortal, and not hateful.

QUEEN. O lost heart!

Give me some mean to die by.

CHASTELARD. Sweet, enough.

You have made no fault; life is not worth a world
That you should weep to take it: would mine were,
And I might give you a world-worthier gift
Than one poor head that love has made a spoil;
Take it for jest, and weep not: let me go.
And think I died of chance or malady.
Nay, I die well; one dies not best abed.

QUEEN. My warrant to reprieve you—that you
saw?

That came between your hands?

CHASTELARD. Yea, not long since.

It seems you have no will to let me die.

QUEEN. Alas, you know 'T wrote it with my heart,
Out of pure love; and since you were in bonds
I have had such grief for love's sake and my heart's—
Yea, by my life I have—I could not choose
But give love way a little. Take my hand;
You know it would have pri. and my heart's blood out
To write reprieve with.

CHASTELARD. Sweet, your hands are kind;
Lay them about my neck, upon my face,
And tell me not of writing.

QUEEN. Nay, by heaven,
I would have given you mine own blood to drink
If that could heal you of your soul-sickness.
Yea, they know that, they curse me for your sake,
Rail at my love—would God their heads were lopped
And we twain left together this side death!
But look you, sweet, if this my warrant hold
You are but dead and shamed; for you must die,
And they will slay you shamefully by force
Even in my sight.

CHASTELARD. Faith, I think so they will.

QUEEN. Nay, they would slay me too, cast stones
at me,
Drag me alive—they have eaten poisonous words,
They are mad and have no shame.

CHASTELARD. Aye, like enough.

QUEEN. Would God my heart were greater; but
God wot

I have no heart to bear with fear and die.
Yea, and I cannot help you: or I know
I should be nobler, bear a better heart:
But as this stands—I pray you for good love,
As you hold honour a costlier thing than life—

CHASTELARD. Well?

QUEEN. Nay, I would not be denied
for shame;
In brief, I pray you give me that again.

CHASTELARD. What, my reprieve?

QUEEN. Even so; deny me not,

For your sake mainly: yea, by God you know
How fain I were to die in your death's stead.
For your name's sake. This were no need to swear.
Lest we be mocked to death with a reprieve,
And so both die, being shamed. What, shall I swear?
What, if I kiss you? must I pluck it out?
You do not love me: no, nor honour. Come,
I know you have it about you: give it me.

CHASTELARD. I cannot yield you such a thing again;
Not as I had it.

QUEEN. A coward? what shift now?
Do such men make such cravens?

CHASTELARD. Chide me not:
Pity me that I cannot help my heart.

QUEEN. Heaven mend mine eyes that took you for
a man!

What, is it sewn into your flesh? take heed—
Nay, but for shame—what have you done with it?

CHASTELARD. Why, there it lies, torn up.

QUEEN. God help me, sir!
Have you done this?

CHASTELARD. Yea, sweet; what should I do?
Did I not know you to the bone, my sweet?
God speed you well! you have a goodly lord.

QUEEN. My love, sweet love, you are more fair
than he,

Yea, fairer many times: I love you much,
Sir, know you that?

CHASTELARD. I think I know that well.
Sit here a little till I feel you through
In all my breath and blood for some sweet while
O gracious body that mine arms have had,

And hair my face has felt on it! grave eyes
And low thick lids that keep since years ago
In the blue sweet of each particular vein
Some special print of me! I am right glad
That I must never feel a bitterer thing
Than your soft curled-up shoulder and amorous arms
From this time forth; nothing can hap to me
Less good than this for all my whole life through.
I would not have some new pain after this
Come spoil the savour. O, your round bird's throat,
More soft than sleep or singing; your calm cheeks,
Turned bright, turned wan with kisses hard and hot;
The beautiful colour of your deep curved hands,
Made of a red rose that had changed to white;
That mouth mine own holds half the sweetness of,
Yea, my heart holds the sweetness of it, whence
My life began in me; mine that ends here
Because you have no mercy, nay you know
You never could have mercy. My fair love,
Kiss me again, God loves you not the less;
Why should one woman have all goodly things?
You have all beauty; let mean women's lips
Be pitiful, and speak truth: they will not be
Such perfect things as yours. Be not ashamed
That hands not made like these that snare men's souls
Should do men good, give alms, relieve men's pain;
You have the better, being more fair than they,
They are half foul, being rather good than fair;
You are quite fair: to be quite fair is best.
Why, two nights hence I dreamed that I could see
In through your bosom under the left flower,
And there was a round hollow, and at heart

A little red snake sitting, without spot,
 That bit—like this, and sucked up sweet—like this,
 And curled its lithe light body right and left,
 And quivered like a woman in act to love.
 Then there was some low fluttered talk i' the lips,
 Faint sound of soft fierce words caressing them—
 Like a fair woman's when her love gets way.
 Ah, your old kiss—I know the ways of it:
 Let the lips cling a little. Take them off,
 And speak some word or I go mad with love.

QUEEN. Will you not have my chaplain come to you?

CHASTELARD. Some better thing of yours—some
 handkerchief,

Some fringe of scarf to make confession to—
 You had some book about you that fell out—

QUEEN. A little written book of Ronsard's rhymes,
 His gift, I wear in there for love of him—
 See, here between our feet.

CHASTELARD.

Aye, my old lord's—

The sweet chief poet, my dear friend long since?
 Give me the book. Lo you, this verse of his:

*With coming lilies in late April came
 Her body, fashioned whiter for their shame;
 And roses, touched with blood since Adon bled,
 From her fair colour filled their lips with red:*

A goodly praise: I could not praise you so.

I read that while your marriage-feast went on.

Leave me this book, I pray you: I would read

The hymn of death here over ere I die;

I shall know soon how much he knew of death

When that was written. O. hing I know now,

I shall not die with half a heart at least.

Nor shift my face, nor weep my fault alive,
Nor swear if I might live and do new deeds
I would do better. Let me keep the book.

QUEEN. Yea, keep it: as would God you had kept
your life

Out of mine eyes and hands. I am wrung to the heart:
This hour feels dry and bitter in my mouth,
As if its sorrow were my body's food
More than my soul's. There are bad thoughts in me—
Most bitter fancies biting me like birds
That tear each other. Suppose you need not die?

CHASTELARD. You know I cannot live for two hours
more.

Our fate was made thus ere our days were made:
Will you fight fortune for so small a grief?
But for one thing I were full fain of death.

QUEEN. What thing is that?

CHASTELARD. None need to name the thing.
Why, what can death do with me fit to fear?
For if I sleep I shall not weep awake;
Or if their saying be true of things to come,
Though hell be sharp, in the worst ache of it
I shall be eased so God will give me back
Sometimes one golden gracious sight of you—
The aureole woven flowerlike through your hair,
And in your lips the little laugh as red
As when it came upon a kiss and ceased,
Touching my mouth.

QUEEN. As I do now, this way,
With my heart after: would I could shed tears,
Tears should not fail when the heart shudders so.
But your bad thought?

CHASTELARD.

Well, such a thought as this:

It may be, long time after I am dead,
For all you are, you may see bitter days;
God may forget you or be wroth with you:
Then shall you lack a little help of me,
And I shall feel your sorrow touching you,
A happy sorrow, though I may not touch:
I that would fain be turned to flesh again,
Fain get back life to give up life for you,
To shed my blood for help, that long ago
You shed and were not holpen: and your heart
Will ache for help and comfort, yea for love,
And find less love than mine—for I do think
You never will be loved thus in your life.

QUEEN. It may be man will never love me more;
For I am sure I shall not love man twice.

CHASTELARD. I know not: men must love you in
life's spite;

For you will always kill them; man by man
Your lips will bite them dead; yea, though you would,
You shall not spare one; all will die of you;
I cannot tell what love shall do with these,
But I for all my love shall have no might
To help you more, mine arms and hands no power
To fasten on you more. This cleaves my heart,
That they shall never touch your body more.
But for your grief—you will not have to grieve;
For being in such poor eyes so beautiful
It must needs be as God is more than I
So much more love he hath of you than mine;
Yea, God shall not be bitter with my love,
Seeing she is so sweet.

I bade them give me but a little hour.

Ah! I do love you! such brief space for love!

I am yours all through, do all your will with me;

What if we lay and let them take us fast,

Lips grasping lips? I dare do anything.

CHASTELARD. Show better cheer: let no man see
you mazed;

Make haste and kiss me; cover up your throat

Lest one see tumbled lace and prate of it.

*Enter the Guard: MURRAY, DARNLEY, MARY HAMILTON,
MARY BEATON, and others with them.*

DARNLEY. Sirs, do your charge; let him not have
much time.

MARY HAMILTON. Peace, lest you chafe the queen:
look, her brows bend.

CHASTELARD. Lords, and all you come hither for
my sake,

If while my life was with me like a friend

That I must now forget the friendship of,

I have done a wrong to any man of you,

As it may be by fault of mine I have;

Of such an one I crave for courtesy

He will now cast it from his mind and heed

Like a dead thing; considering my dead fault

Worth no remembrance further than my death.

This for his gentle honour and goodwill

I do beseech him, doubting not to find

Such kindness if he be nobly made

And of his birth a courteous race of man.

You, my lord James, if you ought toward me—

Or you, Lord Darnley—I dare fear no jot,

Whate'er this be wherein you were aggrieved,
But you will pardon all for gentleness.

DARNLEY. For my part—yea, well, if the thing
stand thus,

As you must die—one would not bear folk hard—
And if the rest shall hold it honourable,
Why, I do pardon you.

MURRAY. Sir, in all things
We find no cause to speak of you but well:
For all I see, save this your deadly fault,
I hold you for a noble perfect man.

CHASTELARD. I thank you, fair lord, for your noble-
ness.

You likewise, for the courtesy you have
I give you thanks, sir; and to all these lords
That have not heart to load me at my death.
Last, I beseech of the best queen of men
And royallest fair lady in the world
To pardon me my grievous mortal sin
Done in such great offence of her: for, sirs,
If ever since I came between her eyes
She hath beheld me other than I am
Or shown her honour other than it is,
Or, save in royal faultless courtesies,
Used me with favour; if by speech or face,
By salutation or by tender eyes,
She hath made a way for my desire to live,
Given ear to me or boldness to my breath;
I pray God cast me forth before day cease
Even to the heaviest place there is in hell.
Yea, if she be not stainless toward all men,
I pray this axe that I shall die upon

May cut me off body and soul from heaven.
Now for my soul's sake I dare pray to you;
Forgive me, madam.

QUEEN. Yea, I do, fair sir:
With all my heart in all I pardon you.

CHASTELARD. God thank you for great mercies.

Lords, set hence;
I am right loth to hold your patience here;
I must not hold much longer any man's.
Bring me my way and bid me fare well forth.

(As they pass out the QUEEN stays MARY BEATON).

QUEEN. Hark hither, sweet. Get back to Holyrood
And take Carmichael with you: go both up
In some chief window whence the squares lie clear—
Seem not to know what I shall do—mark that—
And watch how things fare under. Have good cheer;
You do not think now I can let him die?
Nay, this were shameful madness if you did,
And I should hate you.

MARY BEATON. Pray you love me, madam,
And swear you love me and will let me live,
That I may die the quicker.

QUEEN. Nay, sweet, see,
Nay, you shall see, this must not seem devised;
I will take any man with me, and go;
Yea, for pure hate of them that hate him: yea,
Lay hold upon the headsman and bid strike
Here on my neck; if they will have him die,
Why, I will die too: queens have died this way
For less things than his love is. Nay, I know
They want no blood; I will bring swords to boot
For dear love's rescue though half earth were slain;

What should men do with blood? Stand fast at watch;
For I will be his ransom if I die. [Exeunt.

SCENE III.—*The Upper Chamber in Holyrood.*

MARY BEATON *seated*: MARY CARMICHAEL *at
a window.*

MARY BEATON. Do you see nothing?

MARY CARMICHAEL. Nay, but swarms of men
And talking women gathered in small space,
Flapping their gowns and gaping with fools' eyes:
And a thin ring round one that seems to speak,
Holding his hands out eagerly; no more.

MARY BEATON. Why, I hear more, I hear men shout
The queen.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Nay, no cries yet.

MARY BEATON. Ah, they will cry out soon
When she comes forth; they should cry out on her;
I hear their crying in my heart. Nay, sweet,
Do not you hate her? all men, if God please,
Shall hate her one day; yea, one day no doubt
I shall worse hate her.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Pray you, be at peace;
You hurt yourself: she will be merciful;
What, could you see a true man slain for you?
I think I could not; it is not like our hearts
To have such hard sides to them.

MARY BEATON. O, not you,
And I could nowise; there's some blood in her
That does not run to mercy as ours doth:

That fair face and the cursed heart in her
 Made keener than a knife for manslaying
 Can bear strange things.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Peace, for the people come.
 Ah—Murray, hooded over half his face
 With plucked-down hat, few folk about him, eyes
 Like a man angered; Darnley after him,
 Holding our Hamilton above her wrist,
 His mouth put near her hair to whisper with—
 And she laughs softly, looking at his feet.

MARY BEATON. She will not live long; God hath
 given her
 Few days and evil, full of hate and love,
 I see well now.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Hark, there's their cry—*The
 queen!*
Fair life and long, and good days to the queen!

MARY BEATON. Yea, but God knows. I feel such
 patience here
 As I were sure in a brief while to die.

MARY CARMICHAEL. She bends and laughs a little,
 graciously,
 And turns half, talking to I know not whom—
 A big man with great shoulders; ah, the face,
 You get his face now—wide and duskish, yea
 The youth burnt out of it. A goodly man,
 Thewed mightily and sunburnt to the bone;
 Doubtless he was away in banishment,
 Or kept some march far off.

MARY BEATON. Still you see nothing?

MARY CARMICHAEL. Ye now they bring him forth
 with a great noise,

The folk all shouting and men thrust about
Each way from him.

MARY BEATON. Ah, Lord God, bear with me,
Help me to bear a little with my love
For thine own love, or give me some quick death.
Do not come down; I shall get strength again,
Only my breath fails. Looks he sad or blithe?
Not sad I doubt yet.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Nay, not sad a whit,
But like a man who losing gold or lands
Should lose a heavy sorrow; his face set,
The eyes not curious to the right or left,
And reading in a book, his hands unbound,
With short fleet smiles. The whole place catches breath,
Looking at him; she seems at point to speak:
Now she lies back, and laughs, with her brows drawn
And her lips drawn too. Now they read his crime—
I see the laughter tightening her chin:
Why do you bend your body and draw breath?
They will not slay him in her sight; I am sure
She will not have him slain.

MARY BEATON. Forth, and fear not:
I was just praying to myself—one word,
A prayer I have to say for her to God
If he will mind it.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Now he looks her side;
Something he says, if one could hear thus far:
She leans out, lengthening her throat to hear
And her eyes shining.

MARY BEATON. Ah, I had no hope:
Yea thou God knowest that I had no hope.
Let it end quickly.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Now his eyes are wide
And his smile great; and like another smile
The blood fills all his face. Her cheek and neck
Work fast and hard; she must have pardoned him,
He looks so merrily. Now he comes forth
Out of that ring of people and kneels down;
Ah, how the helve and edge of the great axe
Turn in the sunlight as the man shifts hands—
It must be for a show: because she sits
And hardly moves her head this way—I see
Her chin and lifted lips. Now she stands up,
Puts out her hand, and they fall muttering;
Ah!

MARY BEATON. It is done now?

MARY CARMICHAEL. For God's love, stay there;
Do not look out. Nay, he is dead by this;
But gather up yourself from off the floor;
Will she die too? I shut mine eyes and heard—
Sweet, do not beat your face upon the ground.
Nay, he is dead and slain.

MARY BEATON. What, slain indeed?
I knew he would be slain. Aye, through the neck:
I knew one must be smitten through the neck
To die so quick: if one were stabbed to the heart,
He would die slower.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Will you behold him dead?

MARY BEATON. Yea: must a dead man not be looked
upon
That living one was fain of? give me way.
Lo you, what sort of hair that fellow had;
The doomsman gathers it into his hand

To grasp the head by for all men to see;
I never did that.

MARY CARMICHAEL. For God's love, let me go.

MARY BEATON. I think sometimes she must have
held it so,

Holding his head back, see you, by the hair

To kiss his face, still lying in his arms.

Aye, go and weep: it must be pitiful

If one could see it. What is this they say?

So perish the queen's traitors! Yea, but so

Perish the queen! God, do thus much to her

For his sake only: yea, for pity's sake

Do thus much with her.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Prithee come in with me:
Nay, come at once.

MARY BEATON. If I should meet with her
And spit upon her at her coming in——

But if I live then shall I see one day

When God will smite her lying harlot's mouth——

Surely I shall. Come, I will go with you;

We will sit down together face to face

Now, and keep silence; for this life is hard,

And the end of it is quietness at last.

Come, let us go: here is no word to say.

AN USHER. Make way there for the lord of Both-
well; room——

Place for my lord of Bothwell next the queen.

MARY STUART.

ἀντὶ μὲν ἐχθρᾶς γλώσσης ἐχθρὰ
γλῶσσαι τελείσθω· τοῦ φειλούμενον
πράσσουσα δίκη μέγ' αὖτε
ἀντὶ δὲ πληγῆς φονίας φονίαν
πληγὴν τινέτω· δράσαντι παθεῖν,
τριγέρων μῦθος τάδε φωνεῖ.

ÆSCH. *Cho.* 309-315.

I DEDICATE THIS PLAY,
NO LONGER, AS THE FIRST PART OF THE TRILOGY
WHICH IT COMPLETES WAS DEDICATED,
TO THE GREATEST EXILE, BUT SIMPLY
TO THE GREATEST MAN OF FRANCE:
TO THE CHIEF OF LIVING POETS:
TO THE FIRST DRAMATIST OF HIS AGE:
TO MY BELOVED AND REVERED MASTER
VICTOR HUGO.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MARY STUART.
 MARY BEATON.
 QUEEN ELIZABETH.
 BARBARA MOWBRAY.
 LORD BURGHLEY.
 SIR FRANCIS WALSINGHAM.
 WILLIAM DAVISON.
 ROBERT DUDLEY, *Earl of Leicester.*
 GEORGE TALBOT, *Earl of Shrewsbury.*
 EARL OF KENT.
 HENRY CAREY, *Lord Hunsdon.*
 SIR CHRISTOPHER HATTON.
 SIR THOMAS BROMLEY, *Lord Chancellor.*
 POPHAM, *Attorney-General.*
 EGERTON, *Solicitor-General.*
 GAWDY, *the Queen's Sergeant.*
 SIR AMYAS PAULET.
 SIR DREW DRURY.

SIR THOMAS GORGES.
 SIR WILLIAM WADE.
 SIR ANDREW MELVILLE.
 ROBERT BEALE, *Clerk of the Council.*
 CURLE and NAU, *Secretaries to the Queen of Scots.*
 GORION, *her Apothecary.*
 FATHER JOHN BALLARD,
 ANTHONY BABINGTON,
 CHIDIOCK TICHBORNE,
 JOHN SAVAGE,
 CHARLES TILNEY,
 EDWARD ABINGTON,
 THOMAS SALISBURY,
 ROBERT BARNWELL,
 THOMAS PHILLIPPS, *Secretary to Walsingham.*
 M. DE CHÂTEAUNEUF.
 M. DE BELLÎÈVRE.

} *Conspirators.*

*Commissioners, Privy Councillors. Sheriffs, Citizens, Officers,
and Attendants.*

Time.—FROM AUGUST 14, 1586, TO FEBRUARY 18, 1587.

ACT I.
ANTHONY BABINGTON.

SCENE I.—*Babington's Lodging: a veiled picture on the wall.*

Enter BABINGTON, TICHBORNE, TILNEY, ABINGTON,
SALISBURY, *and* BARNWELL.

BABINGTON. Welcome, good friends, and welcome
this good day

That casts out hope and brings in certainty
To turn raw spring to summer. Now not long
The flower that crowns the front of all our faiths
Shall bleach to death in prison; now the trust
That took the night with fire as of a star
Grows red and broad as sunrise in our sight
Who held it dear and desperate once, now sure,
But not more dear, being surer. In my hand
I hold this England and her brood, and all
That time out of the chance of all her fate
Makes hopeful or makes fearful: days and years,
Triumphs and changes bred for praise or shame
From the unborn womb of these unknown, are ours
That stand yet noteless here, ours even as God's
Who puts them in our hand as his, to wield

And shape to service godlike. None of you
But this day strikes out of the scroll of death
And writes apart immortal; what we would,
That have we; what our fathers, brethren, peers,
Bled and beheld not, died and might not win,
That may we see, touch, handle, hold it fast,
May take to bind our brows with. By my life,
I think none ever had such hap alive
As ours upon whose plighted lives are set
The whole good hap and evil of the state
And of the Church of God and world of men
And fortune of all crowns and creeds that hang
Now on the creed and crown of this our land,
To bring forth fruit to our resolve, and bear
What sons to time it please us; whose mere will
Is father of the future.

TILNEY.

Have you said?

BABINGTON. I cannot say too much of so much good.

TILNEY. Say nothing then a little, and hear one while:
Your talk struts high and swaggers loud for joy,
And safely may perchance, or may not, here;
But why to-day we know not.

BABINGTON.

No, I swear,

Ye know not yet, no man of us but one,
No man on earth; one woman knows, and I,
I that best know her the best begot of man
And noblest; no king born so kingly-souled,
Nor served of such brave servants.

TICHBORNE.

What, as we?

BABINGTON. Is there one vein in one of all our hearts
That is not blown aflame as fire with air
With even the thought to serve her? and, by God,

They that would serve had need be bolder found
Than common kings find servants.

SALISBURY.

Well, your cause?

What need or hope has this day's heat brought forth
To blow such fire up in you?

BABINGTON.

Hark you, sirs;

The time is come, ere I shall speak of this,
To set again the seal on our past oaths
And bind their trothplight faster than it is
With one more witness; not for shameful doubt,
But love and perfect honour. Gentlemen,
Whose souls are brethren sealed and sworn to mine,
Friends that have taken on your hearts and hands
The selfsame work and weight of deed as I,
Look on this picture; from its face to-day
Thus I pluck off the muffled mask, and bare
Its likeness and our purpose. Aye, look here;
None of these faces but are friends of each,
None of these lips unsworn to all the rest,
None of these hands unplighted. Know ye not
What these have bound their souls to? and myself,
I that stand midmost painted here of all,
Have I not right to wear of all this ring
The topmost flower of danger? Who but I
Should crown and close this goodly circle up
Of friends I call my followers? There ye stand,
Fashioned all five in likeness of mere life,
Just your own shapes, even all the man but speech,
As in a speckless mirror; Tichborne, thou,
My nearest heart and brother next in deed,
Then Abington, there Salisbury, Tilney there,
And Barnwell, with the brave bright Irish eye

That burns with red remembrance of the blood
Seen drenching those green fields turned brown and grey
Where fire can burn not faith out, nor the sword
That hews the boughs off lop the root there set
To spread in spite of axes. Friends, take heed;
These are not met for nothing here in show
Nor for poor pride set forth and boastful heart
To make dumb brag of the undone deed, and wear
The ghost and mockery of a crown unearned
Before their hands have wrought it for their heads
Out of a golden danger, glorious doubt,
An act incomparable, by all time's mouths
To be more blessed and cursed than all deeds done
In this swift fiery world of ours, that drives
On such hot wheels toward evil goals or good,
And desperate each as other; but that each,
Seeing here himself and knowing why here, may set
His whole heart's might on the instant work, and hence
Pass as a man rechristened, bathed anew
And swordlike tempered from the touch that turns
Dull iron to the two-edged fang of steel
Made keen as fire by water; so, I say,
Let this dead likeness of you wrought with hands
Whereof ye wist not, working for mine end
Even as ye gave them work, unwittingly,
Quickened with life your vows and purposes
To rid the beast that troubles all the world
Out of men's sight and God's. Are ye not sworn
Or stand not ready girt at perilous need
To strike under the cloth of state itself
The very heart we hunt for?

TICHBORNE.

Let not then

Too high a noise of hound and horn give note
 How hot the hunt is on it, and ere we shoot
 Startle the royal quarry; lest your cry
 Give tongue too loud on such a trail, and we
 More piteously be rent of our own hounds
 Than he that went forth huntsman too, and came
 To play the hart he hunted.

BABINGTON.

Aye, but, see,

Your apish poet's-likeness holds not here,
 If he that fed his hounds on his changed flesh
 Was charmed out of a man and bayed to death
 But through pure anger of a perfect maid;
 For she that should of huntsmen turn us harts
 Is Dian but in mouths of her own knaves,
 And in paid eyes hath only godhead on
 And light to dazzle none but them to death.
 Yet I durst well abide her, and proclaim
 As goddess-like as maiden.

BARNWELL.

Why, myself

Was late at court in presence, and her eyes
 Fixed somehow on me full in face; yet, 'faith,
 I felt for that no lightning in my blood
 Nor blast in mine as of the sun at noon
 To blind their balls with godhead; no, ye see,
 I walk yet well enough.

ABINGTON.

She gazed at you?

BARNWELL. Yes, 'faith; yea, surely; take a Puritan
 oath

To seal my faith for Catholic. What, God help,
 Are not mine eyes yet whole then? am I blind
 Or maimed or scorched, and w not? by my head,

I find it sit yet none the worse for fear
To be so thunder-blasted.

ABINGTON. Hear you, sirs?

TICHBORNE. I was not fain to hear it.

BARNWELL. Which was he

Spake of one changed into a hart? by God,
There be some hearts here need no charm, I think,
To turn them hares of hunters; or if deer,
Not harts but hinds, and rascal.

BABINGTON. Peace, man, peace!

Let not at least this noble cry of hounds
Flash fangs against each other. See what verse
I bade write under on the picture here:
*These are my comrades, whom the peril's self
Draws to it;* how say you? will not all in the end
Prove fellows to me? how should one fall off
Whom danger lures and scares not? Tush, take hands;
It was to keep them fast in all time's sight
I bade my painter set you here, and me
Your loving captain; gave him sight of each
And order of us all in amity.

And if this yet not shame you, or your hearts
Be set as boys' on wrangling, yet, behold,
I pluck as from my heart this witness forth

[*Taking out a letter.*]

To what a work we are bound to, even her hand
Whom we must bring from bondage, and again
Be brought of her to honour. This is she,
Mary the queen, sealed of herself and signed
As mine assured good friend for ever. Now,
Am I more worth or Ballard?

TILNEY.

He it was

Bade get her hand and seal to allow of all
That should be practised; he is wise.

BABINGTON.

Aye, wise!

He was in peril too, he said, God wot,
And must have surety of her, he; but I,
'Tis I that have it, and her heart and trust,
See all here else, her trust and her good love
Who knows mine own heart of mine own hand writ
And sent her for assurance.

SALISBURY.

This we know;

What we would yet have certified of you
Is her own heart sent back, you say, for yours.

BABINGTON. I say? not I, but proof says here, cries out
Her perfect will and purpose. Look you, first
She writes me what good comfort hath she had
To know by letter mine estate, and thus
Reknit the bond of our intelligence,
As grief was hers to live without the same
This great while past; then lovingly commends
In me her own desire to avert betimes
Our enemies' counsel to root out our faith
With ruin of us all; for so she hath shown
All Catholic princes what long since they have wrought
Against the king of Spain; and all this while
The Catholics naked here to all misuse
Fall off in numbered force, in means and power,
And if we look not to it shall soon lack strength
To rise and take that hope or help by the hand
Which time shall offer them; and see for this
What heart is hers! she bids you know of me
Though she were no part of this cause, who holds
Worthless her own weighed with the general weal,

She will be still most willing to this end
To employ therein her life and all she hath
Or in this world may look for.

TICHBORNE.

This rings well;
But by what present mean prepared doth hers
Confirm your counsel? or what way set forth
So to prevent our enemies with good speed
That at the goal we find them not, and there
Fall as men broken?

BABINGTON.

Nay, what think you, man,
Or what esteem of her, that hope should lack
Herein her counsel? hath she not been found
Most wary still, clear-spirited, bright of wit,
Keen as a sword's edge, as a bird's eye swift,
Man-hearted ever? First, for crown and base
Of all this enterprise, she bids me here
Examine with good heed of good event
What power of horse and foot among us all
We may well muster, and in every shire
Choose out what captain for them, if we lack
For the main host a general;—as indeed
Myself being bound to bring her out of bonds
Or here with you cut off the heretic queen
Could take not this on me;—what havens, towns,
What ports to north and west and south, may we
Assure ourselves to hold in certain hand
For entrance and receipt of help from France,
From Spain, or the Low Countries; in what place
Draw our main head together; for how long
Raise for this threefold force of foreign friends
Wage and munition, or what harbours choose
For these to land; or what provision crave

Of coin at need or armour; by what means
 The six her friends deliberate to proceed;
 And last the manner how to get her forth
 From this last hold wherein she newly lies:
 These heads hath she set down, and bids me take
 Of all seven points counsel and common care
 With as few friends as may be of the chief
 Ranged on our part for actors; and thereon
 Of all devised with diligent speed despatch
 Word to the ambassador of Spain in France,
 Who to the experience past of all the estate
 Here on this side aforetime that he hath
 Shall join goodwill to serve us.

TILNEY.

Aye, no more?

Of us no more I mean, who being most near
 To the English queen our natural mistress born
 Take on our hands, her household pensioners',
 The stain and chiefest peril of her blood
 Shed by close violence under trust; no word,
 No care shown further of our enterprise
 That flowers to fruit for her sake?

BABINGTON.

Fear not that;

Abide till we draw thither—aye—she bids
 Get first assurance of such help to come,
 And take thereafter, what before were vain,
 Swift order to provide arms, horses, coin,
 Wherewith to march at word from every shire
 Given by the chief; and save these principals
 Let no man's knowledge less in place partake
 The privy ground we move on—but set forth
 For entertainment of the meaner ear
 We do but fortify us against the plot

Laid of the Puritan part in all this realm
That have their general force now drawn to head
In the Low Countries, whence being home returned
They think to spoil us utterly, and usurp
Not from her only and all else lawful heirs
The kingly power, but from their queen that is
(As we may let the bruit fly forth disguised)
Wrest that which now she hath, if she for fear
Take not their yoke upon her, and therefrom
Catch like infection from plague-tainted air
The purulence of their purity; with which plea
We so may stablsh our confederacies
As wrought but for defence of lands, lives, goods,
From them that would cut off our faith and these;
No word writ straight or given directly forth
Against the queen, but rather showing our will
Firm to maintain her and her lineal heirs,
Myself (she saith) *not named*. Ha, gallant souls,
Hath our queen's craft no savour of sweet wit,
No brain to help her heart with?

TICHBORNE.

But our end—

No word of this yet?

BABINGTON.

And a good word, here,
And worth our note, good friend; being thus prepared,
Time then shall be to set our hands on work
And straight thereon take order that she may
Be suddenly transported out of guard,
Not tarrying till our foreign force come in,
Which then must make the hotter haste; and seeing
We can make no day sure for our design
Nor certain hour appointed when she might

Find other friends at hand on spur of the act
To take her forth of prison, ye should have
About you always, or in court at least,
Scouts furnished well with horses of good speed
To bear the tiding to her and them whose charge
Shall be to bring her out of bonds, that these
May be about her ere her keeper have word
What deed is freshly done; in any case,
Ere he can make him strong within the house
Or bear her forth of it: and need it were
By divers ways to send forth two or three
That one may pass if one be stayed; nor this
Should we forget, to assay in the hour of need
To cut the common posts off; by this plot
May we steer safe, and fall not miserably,
As they that laboured heretofore herein,
Through overhaste to stir upon this side
Ere surety make us strong of strangers' aid.
And if at first we bring her forth of bonds,
Be well assured, she bids us—as I think
She doubts not me that I should let this slip,
Forget so main a matter—well assured
To set her in the heart of some strong host,
Or strength of some good hold, where she may stay
Till we be mustered and the ally drawn in;
For should the queen, being scatheless of us yet
As we unready, fall upon her flight,
The bird untimely fled from snare to snare
Should find being caught again a narrower hold
Whence she should fly forth never, if cause indeed
Should seem not given to make her worse; and we
Should be with all extremity pursued,

To her more grief; for this should grieve her more
Than what might heaviest fall upon her.

TILNEY.

Aye?

She hath had then work enough to do to weep
For them that bled before; Northumberland,
The choice of all the north spoiled, banished, slain,
Norfolk that should have ringed the fourth sad time
The fairest hand wherewith fate ever led
So many a man to deathward, or sealed up
So many an eye from sunlight.

BABINGTON.

By my head,

Which is the main stake of this cast, I swear
There is none worth more than a tear of hers
That man wears living or that man might lose,
Borne upright in the sun, or for her sake
Bowed down by theirs she weeps for: nay, but hear;
She bids me take most vigilant heed, that all
May prosperously find end assured, and you
Conclude with me in judgment; to myself
As chief of trust in my particular
Refers you for assurance, and commends
To counsel seasonable and time's advice
Your common resolution; and again,
If the design take yet not hold, as chance
For all our will may turn it, we should not
Pursue her transport nor the plot laid else
Of our so baffled enterprise; but say
When this were done we might not come at her
Being by mishap close guarded in the Tower
Or some strength else as dangerous, yet, she saith,
For God's sake leave not to proceed herein
To the utmost undertaking; for herself

At any time shall most contentedly
Die, knowing of our deliverance from the bonds
Wherein as slaves we are holden.

BARNWELL.

So shall I,

Knowing at the least of her enfranchisement
Whose life were worth the whole blood shed o' the world
And all men's hearts made empty.

BABINGTON.

Aye, good friend,

Here speaks she of your fellows, that some stir
Might be in Ireland laboured to begin
Some time ere we take aught on us, that thence
The alarm might spring right on the part opposed
To where should grow the danger: she meantime
Should while the work were even in hand assay
To make the Catholics in her Scotland rise
And put her son into their hands, that so
No help may serve our enemies thence; again,
That from our plots the stroke may come, she thinks
To have some chief or general head of all
Were now most apt for the instant end; wherein
I branch not off from her in counsel, yet
Conceive not how to send the appointed word
To the earl of Arundel now fast in bonds
Held in the Tower she spake of late, who now
Would have us give him careful note of this,
Him or his brethren; and from oversea
Would have us seek, if he be there at large,
To the young son of dead Northumberland,
And Westmoreland, whose hand and name, we know,
May do much northward; aye, but this we know,
How much his hand was *less* than his name
When proof was put on either; and the lord

Paget, whose power is in some shires of weight
To incline them usward; both may now be had
And some, she saith, of the exiles principal,
If the enterprise be resolute once, with these
May come back darkling; Paget lies in Spain,
Whom we may treat with by his brother's mean,
Charles, who keeps watch in Paris: then in the end
She bids beware no messenger sent forth
That bears our counsel bear our letters; these
Must through blind hands precede them or ensue
By ignorant posts and severally despatched;
And of her sweet wise heart, as we were fools,
—But that I think she fears not—bids take heed
Of spies among us and false brethren, chief
Of priests already practised on, she saith,
By the enemy's craft against us; what, forsooth,
We have not eyes to set such knaves apart
And look their wiles through, but should need misdoubt
—Whom shall I say the least on all our side?—
Good Gilbert Gifford with his kind boy's face
That fear's lean self could fear not? but God knows
Woman is wise, but woman; none so bold,
So cunning none, God help the soft sweet wit,
But the fair flesh with weakness taints it; why,
She warns me here of perilous scrolls to keep
That I should never bear about me, seeing
By that fault sank all they that fell before
Who should have walked unwounded else of proof,
Unstayed of justice: but this following word
Hath savour of more judgment; we should let
As little as we may our names be known
Or purpose here to the envoy sent from France,

Whom though she hears for honest, we must fear
 His master holds the course of his design
 Far contrary to this of ours, which known
 Might move him to discovery.

TICHBORNE.

Well forewarned:

Forearmed enough were now that cause at need
 Which had but half so good an armour on
 To fight false faith or France in.

BABINGTON.

Peace awhile;

Here she winds up her craft. She hath long time sued
 To shift her lodging, and for answer hath
 None but the Castle of Dudley named as meet
 To serve this turn; and thither may depart,
 She thinks, with parting summer; whence may we
 Devise what means about those lands to lay
 For her deliverance; who from present bonds
 May but by one of three ways be discharged:
 When she shall ride forth on the moors that part
 Her prison-place from Stafford, where few folk
 Use to pass over, on the same day set,
 With fifty or threescore men well horsed and armed,
 To take her from her keeper's charge, who rides
 With but some score that bear but pistols; next,
 To come by deep night round the darkling house
 And fire the barns and stables, which being nigh
 Shall draw the household huddling forth to help,
 And they that come to seek her, wearing each
 A secret sign for note and cognisance,
 May some of them surprise the house, whom she
 Shall with her servants meet and second; last,
 When carts come in at morning, these being met
 In the main gateway's midst may by device

Fall or be sidelong overthrown, and we
Make in thereon and suddenly possess
The house whence lightly might we bear her forth
Ere help came in of soldiers to relief
Who lie a mile or half a mile away
In several lodgings: but howe'er this end
She holds her bounden to me all her days
Who proffer me to hazard for her love,
And doubtless shall as well esteem of you
Or scarce less honourably, when she shall know
Your names who serve beneath me; so commends
Her friend to God, and bids me burn the word
That I would wear at heart for ever; yet,
Lest this sweet scripture haply write us dead,
Where she set hand I set my lips, and thus
Rend mine own heart with her sweet name, and end.
[*Tears the letter.*]

SALISBURY. She hath chosen a trusty servant.

BABINGTON.

Aye, of me?

What ails you at her choice? was this not I
That laid the ground of all this work, and wrought
Your hearts to shape for service? or perchance
The man was you that took this first on him,
To serve her dying and living, and put on
The bloodred name of traitor and the deed
Found for her sake not murderous?

SALISBURY.

Why, they say

First Gifford put this on you, Ballard next,
Whom he brought over to redeem your heart
Half lost for doubt already, and refresh
The flagging flame that fired it first, and now
Fell faltering half in ashes, whence his breath

Hardly with hard pains quickened it and blew
The grey to red rekindling.

BABINGTON.

Sir, they lie

Who say for fear I faltered, or lost heart
For doubt to lose life after; let such know
It shames me not though I were slow of will
To take such work upon my soul and hand
As killing of a queen; being once assured,
Brought once past question, set beyond men's doubts
By witness of God's will borne sensibly,
Meseems I have swerved not.

SALISBURY.

Aye, when once the word

Was washed in holy water, you would wear
Lightly the name so hallowed of priests' lips
That men spell murderer; but till Ballard spake
The shadow of her slaying whom we shall strike
Was ice to freeze your purpose.

TICHBORNE.

Friend, what then?

Is this so small a thing, being English born,
To strike the living empire here at heart
That is called England? stab her present state,
Give even her false-faced likeness up to death,
With hands that smite a woman? I that speak,
Ye know me if now my faith be firm, and will
To do faith's bidding; yet it wrings not me
To say I was not quick nor light of heart,
Though moved perforce I will unwillingly,
To take in trust this charge upon me.

BARNWELL.

I

With all good will would take, and give God thanks,
The charge of all that fall in it: by heaven,
To hear in the end of doubts and doublings heaves

My heart up as with sickness. Why, by this
The heretic harlot that confounds our hope
Should be made carrion, with those following four
That were to wait upon her dead: all five
Live yet to scourge God's servants, and we prate
And threaten here in painting: by my life,
I see no more in us of life or heart
Than in this heartless picture.

BABINGTON.

Peace again;

Our purpose shall not long lack life, nor they
Whose life is deadly to the heart of ours
Much longer keep it; Burghley, Walsingham,
Hunsdon and Knowles, all these four names writ out,
With hers at head they worship, are but now
As those five several letters that spell death
In eyes that read them right. Give me but faith
A little longer: trust that heart awhile
Which laid the ground of all our glories; think
I that was chosen of our queen's friends in France,
By Morgan's hand there prisoner for her sake
On charge of such a deed's device as ours
Commended to her for trustiest, and a man
More sure than might be Ballard and more fit
To bear the burden of her counsels—I
Can be not undeserving, whom she trusts,
That ye should likewise trust me; seeing at first
She writes me but a thankful word, and this,
God wot, for little service; I return
For aptest answer and thankworthiest meed
Word of the usurper's plotted end, and she
With such large heart of trust and liberal faith
As here ye have heard requites me: whom, I think,

For you to trust is no too great thing now
 For me to ask and have of all.

TICHBORNE.

Dear friend,

Mistrust has no part in our mind of you
 More than in hers; yet she too bids take heed,
 As I would bid you take, and let not slip
 The least of her good counsels, which to keep
 No whit proclaims us colder than herself
 Who gives us charge to keep them; and to slight
 No whit proclaims us less unserviceable
 Who are found too hot to serve her than the slave
 Who for cold heart and fear might fail.

BABINGTON.

Too hot!

Why, what man's heart hath heat enough or blood
 To give for such good service? Look you, sirs,
 This is no new thing for my faith to keep,
 My soul to feed its fires with, and my hope
 Fix eyes upon for star to steer by; she
 That six years hence the boy that I was then,
 And page, ye know, to Shrewsbury, gave his faith
 To serve and worship with his body and soul
 For only lady and queen, with power alone
 To lift my heart up and bow down mine eyes
 At sight and sense of her sweet sovereignty,
 Made thence her man for ever; she whose look
 Turned all my blood of life to tears and fire,
 That going or coming, sad or glad—for yet
 She would be somewhat merry, as though to give
 Comfort, and ease at heart her servants, then
 Weep smilingly to be so light of mind,
 Saying she was like the bird grown blithe in bonds
 That if too late set free would die for fear,

Or wild birds hunt it out of life—if sad,
Put madness in me for her suffering's sake,
If joyous, for her very love's sake—still
Made my heart mad alike to serve her, being
I know not when the sweeter, sad or blithe,
Nor what mood heavenliest of her, all whose change
Was as of stars and sun and moon in heaven;
She is well content,—ye have heard her—she, to die,
If we without her may redeem ourselves
And loose our lives from bondage; but her friends
Must take forsooth good heed they be not, no,
Too hot of heart to serve her! And for me,
Am I so vain a thing of wind and smoke
That your deep counsel must have care to keep
My lightness safe in wardship? I sought none—
Craved no man's counsel to draw plain my plot,
Need no man's warning to dispose my deed.
Have I not laid of mine own hand a snare
To bring no less a lusty bird to lure
Than Walsingham with proffer of myself
For scout and spy on mine own friends in France
To fill his wise wide ears with large report
Of all things wrought there on our side, and plots
Laid for our queen's sake? and for all his wit
This politic knave misdoubts me not, whom ye
Hold yet too light and lean of wit to pass
Unspied of wise men on our enemies' part,
Who have sealed the subtlest eyes up of them all.

TICHBORNE. That would I know; for if they be not
blind,
But only wink upon your proffer, seeing
More than they let your own eyes find or fear,

Why, there may lurk a fire to burn us all
Masked in them with false blindness.

BABINGTON.

Hear you, sirs?

Now by the faith I had in this my friend
And by mine own yet flawless toward him, yea
By all true love and trust that holds men fast,
It shames me that I held him in this cause
Half mine own heart, my better hand and eye,
Mine other soul and worthier. Pray you, go;
Let us not hold you; sir, be quit of us;
Go home, lie safe, and give God thanks; lie close,
Keep your head warm and covered; nay, be wise;
We are fit for no such wise folk's fellowship,
No married man's who being bid forth to fight
Holds his wife's kirtle fitter wear for man
Than theirs who put on iron: I did know it,
Albeit I would not know; this man that was,
This soul and sinew of a noble seed,
Love and the lips that burn a bridegroom's through
Have charmed to deathward, and in steel's good stead
Left him a silken spirit.

TICHBORNE.

By that faith

Which yet I think you have found as fast in me
As ever yours I found, you wrong me more
Than were I that your words can make me not
I had wronged myself and all our cause; I hold
No whit less dear for love's sake even than love
Faith, honour, friendship, all that all my days
Was only dear to my desire, till now
This new thing dear as all these only were
Made all these dearer. If love be less
Toward you, toward honour or this cause, then think

I love my wife not either, whom you know
How close at heart I cherish, but in all
Play false alike. Lead now which way you will,
And wear what likeness; though to all men else
It look not smooth, smooth shall it seem to me,
And danger be not dangerous; where you go,
For me shall wildest ways be safe, and straight
For me the steepest; with your eyes and heart
Will I take count of life and death, and think
No thought against your counsel: yea, by heaven,
I had rather follow and trust my friend and die
Than halt and hark mistrustfully behind
To live of him mistrusted.

BABINGTON.

Why, well said:

Strike hands upon it; I think you shall not find
A trustless pilot of me. Keep we fast,
And hold you fast my counsel, we shall see
The state high-built here of heretic hope
Shaken to dust and death. Here comes more proof
To warrant me no liar. You are welcome, sirs;

Enter BALLARD, disguised, and SAVAGE.

Good father captain, come you plumed or cowed,
Or stoled or sworded, here at any hand
The true heart bids you welcome.

BALLARD.

Sir, at none

Is folly welcome to mine ears or eyes.
Nay, stare not on me stormily; I say,
I bid at no hand welcome, by no name,
Be it ne'er so wise or valiant on men's lips,
Pledge health to folly, nor forecast good hope
For them that serve her, I, but take of men
Things ill done ill at any hand alike.

Ye shall not say I cheered you to your death,
 Nor would, though nought more dangerous than your death
 Or deadlier for our cause and God's in ours
 Were here to stand the chance of, and your blood
 Shed vainly with no seed for faith to sow
 Should be not poison for men's hopes to drink.
 What is this picture? Have ye sense or souls,
 Eyes, ears, or wits to take assurance in
 Of how ye stand in strange men's eyes and ears,
 How fare upon their talking tongues, how dwell
 In shot of their suspicion, and sustain
 How great a work how lightly? Think ye not
 These men have ears and eyes about your ways,
 Walk with your feet, work with your hands, and watch
 When ye sleep sound and babble in your sleep?
 What knave was he, or whose man sworn and spy,
 That drank with you last night? whose hireling lip
 Was this that pledged you, Master Babington,
 To a foul quean's downfall and a fair queen's rise?
 Can ye not seal your tongues from tavern speech,
 Nor sup abroad but air may catch it back,
 Nor think who set that watch upon your lips
 Yourselves can keep not on them?

BABINGTON.

What, my friends!

Here is one come to counsel, God be thanked,
 That bears commission to rebuke us all.
 Why, hark you, sir, you that speak judgment, you
 That take our doom upon your double tongue
 To sentence and accuse us with one breath,
 Our doomsman and our justicer for sin,
 Good Captain Ballard, Fath^r Portescue,
 Who made you guardian of us poor men, gave

Your wisdom wardship of our follies, chose
Your faith for keeper of our faiths, that yet
Were never taxed of change or doubted? You,
'Tis you that have an eye to us, and take note
What time we keep, what place, what company,
How far may wisdom trust us to be wise
Or faith esteem us faithful, and yourself
Were once the hireling hand and tongue and eye
That waited on this very Walsingham
To spy men's counsels and betray their blood
Whose trust had sealed you trusty? By God's light,
A goodly guard I have of you, to crave
What man was he I drank with yesternight,
What name, what shape, what habit, as, forsooth,
Were I some statesman's knave and spotted spy,
The man I served, and cared not how, being dead,
His molten gold should glut my throat in hell,
Might question of me whom I snared last night,
Make inquisition of his face, his gait,
His speech, his likeness. Well, be answered then;
By God, I know not; but God knows I think
The spy most dangerous on my secret walks
And witness of my ways most worth my fear
And deadliest listener to devour my speech
Now questions me of danger, and the tongue
Most like to sting my trust and life to death
Now taxes mine of rashness.

BALLARD.

Is he mad?

Or are ye brainsick all with heat of wine
That stand and hear him rage like men in storms
Made drunk with danger? have ye sworn with him
To die the fool's death too of furious fear

And passion scared to slaughter of itself?
Is there none here that knows his cause or me,
Nor what should save or spoil us?

TICHBORNE.

Friend, give ear;

For God's sake, yet be counselled.

BABINGTON.

Aye, for God's!

What part hath God in this man's counsels? nay,
Take you part with him; nay, in God's name go;
What should you do to bide with me? turn back;
There stands your captain.

SAVAGE.

Hath not one man here

One spark in spirit or sprinkling left of shame?
I that looked once for no such fellowship,
But soldier's hearts in shapes of gentlemen,
I am sick with shame to hear men's jangling tongues
Outnoise their swords unbloodied. Hear me, sirs;
My hand keeps time before my tongue, and hath
But wit to speak in iron; yet as now
Such wit were sharp enough to serve our turn
That keenest tongues may serve not. One thing sworn
Calls on our hearts; the queen must singly die,
Or we, half dead men now with dallying, must
Die several deaths for her brief one, and stretched
Beyond the scope of sufferance; wherefore here
Choose out the man to put this peril on
And gird him with this glory: let him pass
Straight hence to court, and through all stays of state
Strike death into her heart.

BABINGTON.

Why, this rings right;

Well said, and soldierlike; do thus, and take
The vanguard of us all for our.

SAVAGE.

Aye,

Well would I go, but seeing no courtly suit
Like yours, her servants and her pensioners,
The doorkeepers will bid my baseness back
From passage to her presence.

BABINGTON. O, for that,
Take this and buy; nay, start not from your word;
You shall not.

SAVAGE. Sir, I shall not.

BABINGTON. Here's more gold;
Make haste, and God go with you; if the plot
Be blown on once of men's suspicious breath,
We are dead, and all die bootless deaths—be swift—
And her we have served we shall but surely slay.
I will make trial again of Walsingham
If he misdoubt us. O, my cloak and sword—

[*Knocking within.*]

I will go forth myself. What noise is that?
Get you to Gage's lodging; stay not here;
Make speed without for Westminster; perchance
There may we safely shift our shapes and fly,
If the end be come upon us.

BALLARD. It is here.

Death knocks at door already. Fly; farewell.

BABINGTON. I would not leave you—but they know
you not—

You need not fear, being found here singly.

BALLARD. No.

BABINGTON. Nay, halt not, sirs; no word but haste;
this way,

Ere they break down the doors. God speed us well!

[*Exeunt all but BALLARD. As they go out
enter an Officer with Soldiers,*

OFFICER. Here's one fox yet by the foot; lay hold on him.

BALLARD. What would you, sirs?

OFFICER. Why, make one foul bird fast,
Though the full flight be scattered: for their kind
Must prey not here again, nor here put on
The jay's loose feathers for the raven priest's
To mock the blear-eyed marksman: these plucked off
Shall show the nest that sent this fledgeling forth,
Hatched in the hottest holy nook of hell.

BALLARD. I am a soldier.

OFFICER. Aye, the badge we know
Whose broidery signs the shoulders of the file
That Satan marks for Jesus. Bind him fast:
Blue satin and slashed velvet and gold lace,
Methinks we have you, and the hat's band here
So seemly set with silver buttons, all
As here was down in order; by my faith,
A goodly ghostly friend to shrive a maid
As ever kissed for penance: pity 'tis
The hangman's hands must hallow him again
When this lay slough slips off, and twist one rope
For priest to swing with soldier. Bring him hence.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*Chartley.*

MARY STUART *and* MARY BEATON.

MARY STUART. We shall not need keep house for
fear to-day;
The skies are fair and hot the wind sits well
For hound and horn to chime with. I will go.

MARY BEATON. How far from this to Tixall?

MARY STUART. Nine or ten

Or what miles more I care not; we shall find
Fair field and goodly quarry, or he lies,
The gospeller that bade us to the sport,
Protesting yesternight the shire had none
To shame Sir Walter Aston's. God be praised,
I take such pleasure yet to back my steed
And bear my crossbow for a deer's death well,
I am almost half content—and yet I lie—
To ride no harder nor more dangerous heat
And hunt no beast of game less gallant.

MARY BEATON. Nay,

You grew long since more patient.

MARY STUART. Ah, God help!

What should I do but learn the word of him
These years and years, the last word learnt but one,
That ever I loved least of all sad words?
The last is death for any soul to learn,
The last save death is patience.

MARY BEATON. Time enough

We have had ere death of life to learn it in
Since you rode last on wilder ways than theirs
That drive the dun deer to his death.

MARY STUART. Eighteen—

How many more years yet shall God mete out
For thee and me to wait upon their will
And hope or hope not, watch or sleep, and dream
Awake or sleeping? surely fewer, I think,
Than half these years that all have less of life
Than one of those more fleet that flew before.
I am yet some ten years younger than this queen,

Some nine or ten; but if I die this year
And she some score years longer than I think
Be royal-titled, in one year of mine
I shall have lived the longer life, and die
The fuller-fortuned woman. Dost thou mind
The letter that I writ nigh two years gone
To let her wit what privacies of hers
Our trusty dame of Shrewsbury's tongue made mine
Ere it took fire to sting her lord and me?
How thick soe'er o'erscurfed with poisonous lies,
Of her I am sure it lied not; and perchance
I did the wiselier, having writ my fill,
Yet to withhold the letter when she sought
Of me to know what villainies had it poured
In ears of mine against her innocent name:
And yet thou knowest what mirthful heart was mine
To write her word of these, that had she read
Had surely, being but woman, made her mad,
Or haply, being not woman, had not. 'Faith,
How say'st thou? did I well?

MARY BEATON.

Aye, surely well

To keep that back you did not ill to write.

MARY STUART. I think so, and again I think not; yet
The best I did was bid thee burn it. She,
That other Bess I mean of Hardwick, hath
Mixed with her gall the fire at heart of hell,
And all the mortal medicines of the world
To drug her speech with poison; and God wot
Her daughter's child here that I bred and loved,
Bess Pierpoint, my sweet bedfellow that was,
Keeps too much savour of my grandam's stock
For me to match with Nau; my secretary

And those salt springs of life, through fire and tears
 That bring forth pain and pleasure in their kind
 To make good days and evil, all in her
 Lie sere and sapless as the dust of death.
 I have found no great good hap in all my days
 Nor much good cause to make me glad of God,
 Yet have I had and lacked not of my life
 My good things and mine evil: being not yet
 Barred from life's natural ends of evil and good
 Foredoomed for man and woman through the world
 Till all their works be nothing: and of mine
 I know but this—though I should die to-day,
 I would not take for mine her fortune.

MARY BEATON.

No?

Myself perchance I would not.

MARY STUART.

Dost thou think

That fire-tongued witch of Shrewsbury spake once truth
 Who told me all those quaint foul merry tales
 Of our dear sister that at her desire
 I writ to give her word of, and at thine
 Withheld and put the letter in thine hand
 To burn as was thy counsel? for my part,
 How loud she lied soever in the charge
 That for adultery taxed me with her lord
 And being disproved before the council here
 Brought on their knees to give themselves the lie
 Her and her sons by that first lord of four
 That took in turn this hell-mouthed hag to wife
 And got her kind upon her, yet in this
 I do believe she lied not more than I
 Reporting her by record, 'twas she said
 What infinite times had Leicester and his queen

Plucked all the fruitless fruit of baffled love
That being contracted privily they might,
With what large gust of fierce and foiled desire
This votaress crowned, whose vow could no man break,
Since God whose hand shuts up the unkindly womb
Had sealed it on her body, man by man
Would course her kindless lovers, and in quest
Pursue them hungering as a hound in heat,
Full on the fiery scent and slot of lust,
That men took shame and laughed and marvelled; one,
Her chamberlain, so hotly would she trace
And turn perforce from cover, that himself
Being tracked at sight thus in the general eye
Was even constrained to play the piteous hare
And wind and double till her amorous chase
Were blind with speed and breathless; but the worst
Was this, that for this country's sake and shame's
Our huntress Dian could not be content
With Hatton and another born her man
And subject of this kingdom, but to heap
The heavier scandal on her countrymen
Had cast the wild growth of her lust away
On one base-born, a stranger, whom of nights
Within her woman's chamber would she seek
To kiss and play for shame with secretly;
And with the duke her bridegroom that should be,
That should and could not, seeing forsooth no man
Might make her wife or woman, had she dealt
As with this knave his follower; for by night
She met him coming at her chamber door
In her bare smock and night-rail, and thereon
Bade him come in; who there abode three hours:

But fools were they that thought to bind her will
And stay with one man or allay the mood
That ranging still gave tongue on several heats
To hunt fresh trails of lusty love; all this,
Thou knowest, on record truly was set down,
With much more villainous else: she prayed me write
That she might know the natural spirit and mind
Toward her of this fell witch whose rancorous mouth
Then bayed my name, as now being great with child
By her fourth husband, in whose charge I lay
As here in Paulet's; so being moved I wrote,
And yet I would she had read it, though not now
Would I re-write each word again, albeit
I might, or thou, were I so minded, or
Thyself so moved to bear such witness; but
'Tis well we know not how she had borne to read
All this and more, what counsel gave the dame,
With loud excess of laughter urging me
To enter on those lists of love-making
My son for suitor to her, who thereby
Might greatly serve and stead me in her sight;
And I replying that such a thing could be
But held a very mockery, she returns,
The queen was so infatuate and distraught
With high conceit of her fair fretted face
As of a heavenly goddess, that herself
Would take it on her head with no great pains
To bring her to believe it easily;
Being so past reason fain of flattering tongues
She thought they mocked her not nor lied who said
They might not sometimes look her full in face
For the light glittering from it as the sun;

And so perforce must all her women say
And she herself that spake, who durst not look
For fear to laugh out each in other's face
Even while they fooled and fed her vein with words,
Nor let their eyes cross when they spake to her
And set their feature fast as in a frame
To keep grave countenance with gross mockery lined;
And how she prayed me chide her daughter, whom
She might by no means move to take this way,
And for her daughter Talbot was assured
She could not ever choose but laugh outright
Even in the good queen's flattered face. God wot,
Had she read all, and in my hand set down,
I could not blame her though she had sought to take
My head for payment; no less poise on earth
Had served, and hardly, for the writer's fee;
I could not much have blamed her; all the less,
That I did take this, though from slanderous lips,
For gospel and not slander, and that now
I yet do well believe it.

MARY BEATON.

And herself

Had well believed so much, and surely seen,
For all your protest of discredit made
With God to witness that you could not take
Such tales for truth of her nor would not, yet
You meant not she should take your word for this,
As well I think she would not.

MARY STUART.

Haply, no.

We do protest not thus to be believed.
And yet the witch in one thing seven years since
Belied her, saying she then must needs die soon
For timeless fault of nature. Now belike

MARY BEATON. Have you hope
The chase to-day may serve our further ends
Than to renew your spirit and bid time speed?

MARY STUART. I see not but I may; the hour is full
Which I was bidden expect of them to bear
More fruit than grows of promise; Babington
Should tarry now not long; from France our friends
Lift up their heads to usward, and await
What comfort may confirm them from our part
Who sent us comfort; Ballard's secret tongue
Has kindled England, striking from men's hearts
As from a flint the fire that slept, and made
Their dark dumb thoughts and dim disfigured hopes
Take form from his and feature, aim and strength,
Speech and desire toward action; all the shires
Wherein the force lies hidden of our faith
Are stirred and set on edge of present deed
And hope more imminent now of help to come
And work to do than ever; not this time
We hang on trust in succour that comes short
By Philip's fault from Austrian John, whose death
Put widow's weeds on mine unwedded hope,
Late trothplight to his enterprise in vain
That was to set me free, but might not seal
The faith it pledged nor on the hand of hope
Make fast the ring that weds desire with deed
And promise with performance; Parma stands
More fast now for us in his uncle's stead,
Albeit the lesser warrior, yet in place
More like to avail us, and in happier time

To do like service; for my cousin of Guise,
His hand and league hold fast our kinsman king,
If not to bend and shape him for our use,
Yet so to govern as he may not thwart
Our forward undertaking till its force
Discharge itself on England: from no side
I see the shade of any fear to fail
As those before so baffled; heart and hand
Our hope is armed with trust more strong than steel
And spirit to strike more helpful than a sword
In hands that lack the spirit; and here to-day
It may be I shall look this hope in the eyes
And see her face transfigured. God is good
He will not fail his faith for ever. O,
That I were now in saddle! Yet an hour
And I shall be as young again as May
Whose life was come to August; like this year,
I had grown past midway of my life, and sat
Heartsick of summer; but new-mounted now
I shall ride right through shine and shade of spring
With heart and habit of a bride, and bear
A brow more bright than fortune. Truth it is,
Those words of bride and May should on my tongue
Sound now not merry, ring no joy-bells out
In ears of hope or memory; not for me
Have they been joyous words; but this fair day
All sounds that ring delight in fortunate ears
And words that make men thankful, even to me
Seem thankworthy for joy they have given me not
And hope which now they should not.

MARY BEATON.

Nay, who knows
The less they have given of joy, the more they may;

MARY STUART.

God, I pray,

MARY BEATON.

Dear my queen,

MARY STUART.

So I said.

My spirit is fallen again from that glad strength
 Which even but now arrayed it; yet what cause
 Should dull the dancing measure in my blood
 For doubt or wrath, I know not. Being once forth,
 My heart again will quicken. [Sings.

*And ye maun braid your yellow hair
 And busk ye like a bride;
 Wi' sevenscore men to bring ye hame,
 And ae true love beside;
 Between the birk and the green rowan
 Fu' blithely shall ye ride.*

*O ye maun braid my yellow hair,
 But braid it like nae bride;
 And I maun gang my ways, mither,
 Wi' nae true love beside;
 Between the kirk and the kirkyard
 Fu' sadly shall I ride.*

How long since,
 How long since was it last I heard or sang
 Such light lost ends of old faint rhyme worn thin
 With use of country songsters? When we twain
 Were maidens but some twice a span's length high,
 Thou hadst the happier memory to hold rhyme,
 But not for songs the merrier.

MARY BEATON. This was one
 That I would sing after my nurse, I think,
 And weep upon in France at six years old
 To think of Scotland.

MARY STUART. Would I weep for that,

Woman or child, I have had now years enough
 To weep in; thou wast never French in heart,
 Serving the queen of France. Poor queen that was,
 Poor boy that played her bridegroom! now they seem
 In these mine eyes that were her eyes as far
 Beyond the reach and range of oldworld time
 As their first fathers' graves.

Enter SIR AMYAS PAULET.

PAULET. Madam, if now
 It please you to set forth, the hour is full,
 And there your horses ready.

MARY STUART. Sir, my thanks.
 We are bounden to you and this goodly day
 For no small comfort. Is it your will we ride
 Accompanied with any for the nonce
 Of our own household?

PAULET. If you will, to-day
 Your secretaries have leave to ride with you.

MARY STUART. We keep some state then yet. I
 pray you, sir,
 Doth he wait on you that came here last month,
 A low-built lank-cheeked Judas-bearded man,
 Lean, supple, grave, pock-pitten, yellow-polled,
 A smiling fellow with a downcast eye?

PAULET. Madam, I know the man for none of mine.

MARY STUART. I give you joy as you should give
 God thanks,
 Sir, if I err not; but meseemed this man
 Found gracious entertainment here, and took
 Such counsel with you as I surely thought
 Spake him your friend, an' honourable; but now
 If I misread not an ambiguous word

PAULET.

Aye.

She walks but half blind yet to the end; even now
She spake of you, and questioned doubtfully
What here you came to do, or held what place
Or commerce with me: when you caught her eye,
It seems your courtesy by some graceless chance
Found but scant grace with her.

PHILLIPPS.

'Tis mine own blame,

Or fault of mine own feature; yet forsooth
I greatly covet not their gracious hap
Who have found or find most grace with her. I pray,
Doth Wade go with you?

PAULET.

Nay,—what, know you not?—

But with Sir Thomas Gorges, from the court,
To drive this deer at Tixall.

PHILLIPPS.

Two years since,

He went, I think, commissioned from the queen
To treat with her at Sheffield?

PAULET.

Aye, and since

She hath not seen him; who being known of here
Had haply given her swift suspicion edge
Or cause at least of wonder.

PHILLIPPS.

And I doubt

His last year's entertainment oversea
As our queen's envoy to demand of France
Her traitor Morgan's body whence he brought
Nought save dry blows back from the duke d'Aumale
And for that prisoner's quarters here to hang
His own not whole but beaten, should not much
Incline him to more good regard of her
For whose love's sake her hands have dealt with him
So honourably, nor she that knows of this

Be the less like to take his presence here
For no good presage to her: you have both done well
To keep his hand as close herein as mine.

PAULET. Sir, by my faith I know not, for myself,
What part is for mine honour, or wherein
Of all this action laid upon mine hand
The name and witness of a gentleman
May gain desert or credit, and increase
In seed and harvest of good men's esteem
For heritage to his heirs, that men unborn
Whose fame is as their name derived from his
May reap in reputation; and indeed
I look for none advancement in the world
Further than this that yet for no man's sake
Would I forego, to keep the name I have
And honour, which no son of mine shall say
I have left him not for any deed of mine
As perfect as my sire bequeathed it me:
I say, for any word or work yet past
No tongue can thus far tax me of decline
From that fair forthright way of gentleman,
Nor shall for any that I think to do
Or aught I think to say alive: howbeit,
I were much bounden to the man would say
But so much for me in our mistress' ear,
The treasurer's, or your master Walsingham's,
Whose office here I have undergone thus long
And had I leave more gladly would put off
Than ever I put on me; being not one
That out of love toward England even or God
At mightiest men's desire would lightly be
For loyalty disloyal, or approved

In trustless works a trusty traitor; this
He that should tell them of me, to procure
The speedier end here of this work imposed,
Should bind me to him more heartily than thanks
Might answer.

PHILLIPPS. Good Sir Amyas, you and I
Hold no such office in this dangerous time
As men make love to for their own name's sake
Or personal lust of honour; but herein
I pray you yet take note, and pardon me
If I for the instance mix your name with mine,
That no man's private honour lies at gage,
Nor is the stake set here to play for less
Than what is more than all men's names alive,
The great life's gage of England; in whose name
Lie all our own impledged, as all our lives
For her redemption forfeit, if the cause
Call once upon us; not this gift or this,
Or what best likes us or were gladliest given
Or might most honourably be parted with
For our more credit on her best behalf,
Doth she we serve, this land that made us men,
Require of all her children; but demands
Of our great duty toward her full deserts
Even all we have of honour or of life,
Of breath or fame to give her. What were I
Or what were you, being mean or nobly born,
Yet moulded both of one land's natural womb
And fashioned out of England, to deny
What gift she crave soever, choose and grudge
What grace we list to give or what withhold,
Refuse and reckon with her when she bids

Yield up forsooth not life but fame to come,
A good man's praise or gentleman's repute,
Or lineal pride of children, and the light
Of loyalty remembered? which of these
Were worth our mother's death, or shame that might
Fall for one hour on England? She must live
And keep in all men's sight her honour fast
Though all we die dishonoured; and myself
Know not nor seek of men's report to know
If what I do to serve her till I die
Be honourable or shameful, and its end
Good in men's eyes or evil; but for God,
I find not why the name or fear of him
Herein should make me swerve or start aside
Through faint heart's falsehood as a broken bow
Snapped in his hand that bent it, ere the shaft
Find out his enemies' heart, and I that end
Whereto I am sped for service even of him
Who put this office on us.

PAULET.

Truly, sir,

I lack the wordy wit to match with yours,
Who speak no more than soldier; this I know,
I am sick in spirit and heart to have in hand
Such work or such device of yours as yet
For fear and conscience of what worst may come
I dare not well bear through.

PHILLIPPS.

Why, so last month

You writ my master word and me to boot
I had set you down a course for many things
You durst not put in execution, nor
Consign the packet to this lady's hand
That was returned from mine, seeing all was well,

And you should hold yourself most wretched man
If by your mean or order there should spring
Suspicion 'twixt the several messengers
Whose hands unwitting each of other ply
The same close trade for the same golden end,
While either holds his mate a faithful fool
And all their souls, baseborn or gently bred,
Are coined and stamped and minted for our use
And current in our service; I thereon
To assuage your doubt and fortify your fear
Was posted hither, where by craft and pains
The web is wound up of our enterprise
And in our hands we hold her very heart
As far as all this while we held impawned
The faith of Barnes that stood for Gifford here
To take what letters for his mistress came
From southward through the ambassador of France
And bear them to the brewer, your honest man,
Who wist no further of his fellowship
Than he of Gifford's, being as simple knaves
As knavish each in his simplicity,
And either serviceable alike, to shift
Between my master's hands and yours and mine
Her letters writ and answered to and fro;
And all these faiths as weathertight and safe
As was the box that held those letters close
At bottom of the barrel, to give up
The charge there sealed and ciphered, and receive
A charge as great in peril and in price
To yield again, when they drew off the beer
That weekly served this lad - household whom
We have drained as dry of secrets drugged with death

As ever they this vessel, and return
To her own lips the dregs she brewed or we
For her to drink have tempered. What of this
Should seem so strange now to you, or distaste
So much the daintier palate of your thoughts,
That I should need reiterate you by word
The work of us o'erpast, or fill your ear
With long foregone recital, that at last
Your soul may start not or your sense recoil
To know what end we are come to, or what hope
We took in hand to cut this peril off
By what close mean soe'er and what foul hands
Unwashed of treason, which it yet mislikes
Your knightly palm to touch or close with, seeing
The grime of gold is baser than of blood
That barks their filthy fingers? yet with these
Must you cross hands and grapple, or let fall
The trust you took to treasure.

PAULET.

Sir, I will,

Even till the queen take back that gave it; yet
Will not join hands with these, nor take on mine
The taint of their contagion; knowing no cause
That should confound or couple my good name
With theirs more hateful than the reek of hell.
You had these knaveries and these knaves in charge,
Not I that knew not how to handle them
Nor whom to choose for chief of treasons, him
That in mine ignorant eye, unused to read
The shameful scripture of such faces, bare
Graved on his smooth and simple cheek and brow
No token of a traitor; yet this boy,
This milk-mouthed weanling with his maiden chin,

This soft-lipped knave, late suckled as on blood
And nursed of poisonous nipples, have you not
Found false or feared by this, whom first you found
A trustier thief and worthier of his wage
Than I, poor man, had wit to find him? I,
That trust no changelings of the church of hell,
No babes reared priestlike at the paps of Rome
Who have left the old harlot's deadly dugs drawn dry,
I lacked the craft to rate this knave of price,
Your smock-faced Gifford, at his worth aright,
Which now comes short of promise.

PHILLIPPS.

O, not he;

Let not your knighthood for a slippery word
So much misdoubt his knaveship; here from France,
On hint of our suspicion in his ear
Half jestingly recorded, that his hand
Were set against us in one politic track
With his old yoke-fellows in craft and creed,
Betraying not them to us but ourselves to them,
My Gilbert writes me with such heat of hand
Such piteous protestation of his faith
So stuffed and swoln with burly-bellied oaths
And God and Christ confound him if he lie
And Jesus save him as he speaks mere truth,
My gracious godly priestling, that yourself
Must sure be moved to take his truth on trust
Or stand for him approved an atheist.

PAULET.

Well,

That you find stuff of laughter in such gear
And mirth to make out of the godless mouth
Of such a twice-turned villain, for my part
I take in token of your certain trust,

And make therewith mine own assurance sure,
To see betimes an end of all such craft
As takes the faith forsworn of loud-tongued liars
And blasphemies of brothel-breathing knaves
To build its hope or break its jest upon;
And so commend you to your charge, and take
Mine own on me less gladly; for by this
She should be girt to ride, as the old saw saith,
Out of God's blessing into the warm sun
And out of the warm sun into the pit
That men have dug before her, as herself
Had dug for England else a deeper grave
To hide our hope for ever: yet I would
This day and all that hang on it were done. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*Before Tixall Park.*

MARY STUART, MARY BEATON, PAULET, CURLE, NAU,
and Attendants.

MARY STUART. If I should never more back steed
alive

But now had ridden hither this fair day
The last road ever I must ride on earth,
Yet would I praise it, saying of all days gone
And all roads ridden in sight of stars and sun
Since first I sprang to saddle, here at last
I had found no joyless end. These ways are smooth,
And all this land's face merry; yet I find
The ways even therefore not so good to ride,
And all the land's face therefore less worth love,
Being smoother for a palfrey's maiden pace

And merrier than our moors for outlook; nay,
I lie to say so; there the wind and sun
Make madder mirth by midsummer, and fill
With broader breath and lustier length of light
The heartier hours that clothe for even and dawn
Our bosom-belted billowy-blossoming hills
Whose hearts break out in laughter like the sea
For miles of heaving heather. Ye should mock
My banished praise of Scotland; and in faith
I praised it but to prick you on to praise
Of your own goodly land; though field and wood
Be parked and parcelled to the sky's edge out,
And this green Stafford moorland smooth and strait
That we but now rode over, and by ours
Look pale for lack of large live mountain bloom
Wind-buffeted with morning, it should be
Worth praise of men whose lineal honour lives
In keeping here of history: but meseems
I have heard, Sir Amyas, of your liberal west
As of a land more affluent-souled than this
And fruitful-hearted as the south-wind; here
I find a fair-faced change of temperate clime
From that bald hill-brow in a broad bare plain
Where winter laid us both his prisoners late
Fast by the feet at Tutbury; but men say
Your birthright in this land is fallen more fair
In goodlier ground of heritage perchance,
Grief to be now barred thence by mean of me,
Who less than you can help it or myself,
Makes you ride sad and sullen.

PAULET. Madam, no;
I pray you lay not to my wilful charge

The blame or burden of discourtesy
That but the time should bear which lays on me
This weight of thoughts untimely.

MARY STUART.

Nay, fair sir,

If I, that have no cause in life to seem
Glad of my sad life more than prisoners may,
Take comfort yet of sunshine, he methinks
That holds in ward my days and nights might well
Take no less pleasure of this broad blithe air
Than his poor charge that too much troubles him.
What, are we nigh the chase?

PAULET.

Even hard at hand.

MARY STUART. Can I not see between the glittering
leaves

Gleam the dun hides and flash the startled horns
That we must charge and scatter? Were I queen
And had a crown to wager on my hand,
Sir, I would set it on the chance to-day
To shoot a flight beyond you.

PAULET.

Verily,

The hazard were too heavy for my skill:
I would not hold your wager.

MARY STUART.

No! and why?

PAULET. For fear to come a bowshot short of
you

On the left hand, unluckily.

MARY STUART.

My friend,

Our keeper's wit-shaft is too keen for ours
To match its edge with pointless iron.—Sir,
Your tongue shoots further than my hand or eye
With sense or aim can follow.—Gilbert Curle,
Your heart yet halts behind this cry of hounds,

Hunting your own deer's trail at home, who lies
Now close in covert till her bearing-time
Be full to bring forth kindly fruit of kind
To love that yet lacks issue; and in sooth
I blame you not to bid all sport go by
For one white doe's sake travailing, who myself
Think long till I may take within mine arm
The soft fawn suckling that is yeaned not yet
But is to make her mother. We must hold
A goodly christening feast with prisoner's cheer
And mirth enow for such a tender thing
As will not weep more to be born in bonds
Than babes born out of gaoler's ward, nor grudge
To find no friend more fortunate than I
Nor happier hand to welcome it, nor name
More prosperous than poor mine to wear, if God
Shall send the new-made mother's breast, for love
Of us that love his mother's maidenhood,
A maid to be my namechild, and in all
Save love to them that love her, by God's grace,
Most unlike me; for whose unborn sweet sake
Pray you meantime be merry.—'Faith, methinks
Here be more huntsmen out afield to-day
And merrier than my guardian. Sir, look up;
What think you of these riders?—All my friends,
Make on to meet them.

PAULET. They shall need no haste;
They ride not slack or lamely.

MARY STUART. Now, fair sir,
What say you to my chance on wager? here
I think to outshoot your archer. —By my life,
That too must fail if hope now fail me; these

That ride so far off yet, being come, shall bring
Death or deliverance. Prithee, speak but once;

[*Aside to MARY BEATON.*

Say, these are they we looked for; say, thou too
Hadst hope to meet them; say, they should be here,
And I did well to look for them; O God!

Say but I was not mad to hope; see there;
Speak, or I die.

MARY BEATON. Nay, not before they come.

MARY STUART. Dost thou not hear my heart? it
speaks so loud

I can hear nothing of them. Yet I will not
Fail in mine enemy's sight. This is mine hour
That was to be for triumph; God, I pray,
Stretch not its length out longer!

MARY BEATON. It is past.

*Enter SIR THOMAS GORGES, SIR WILLIAM WADE,
and Soldiers.*

MARY STUART. What man is this that stands across
our way?

GORGES. One that hath warrant, madam, from the
queen

To arrest your French and English secretary
And for more surety see yourself removed
To present ward at Tixall here hard by,
As in this paper stands of her subscribed.
Lay hands on them.

MARY STUART. Was this your riddle's word?

[*To PAULET.*

You have shot beyond me indeed, and shot to death
Your honour with my life.—Draw, sirs, and stand;
Ye have swords yet left to strike with once, and die

By these our foes are girt with. Some good friend—
I should have one yet left of you—take heart
And slay me here. For God's love, draw; they have not
So large a vantage of us we must needs
Bear back one foot from peril. Give not way;
Ye shall but die more shamefully than here
Who can but here die fighting. What, no man?
Must I find never at my need alive
A man with heart to help me? O, my God,
Let me die now and foil them! Paulet, you,
Most knightly liar and traitor, was not this
Part of your charge, to play my hangman too,
Who have played so well my doomsman, and betrayed
So honourably my trust, so bravely set
A snare so loyal to make sure for death
So poor a foolish woman? Sir, or you
That have this gallant office, great as his,
To do the deadliest errand and most vile
That even your mistress ever laid on man
And sent her basest knave to bear and slay,
You are likewise of her chivalry, and should not
Shrink to fulfil your title; being a knight,
For her dear sake that made you, lose not heart
To strike for her one worthy stroke, that may
Rid me defenceless of the loathed long life
She gapes for like a bloodhound. Nay, I find
A face beside you that should bear for me
Not life inscribed upon it; two years since
I read therein at Sheffield what good will
She bare toward me that sent to treat withal
So mean a man and shame! by his tongue
To smite mine honour on the face, and turn

My name of queen to servant; by his hand
So let her turn my life's name now to death,
Which I would take more thankfully than shame
To plead and thus prevail not.

PAULET. Madam, no,
With us you may not in such suit prevail
Nor we by words or wrath of yours be moved
To turn their edge back on you, nor remit
The least part of our office, which deserves
Nor scorn of you nor wonder, whose own act
Has laid it on us; wherefore with less rage
Please you take thought now to submit yourself,
Even for your own more honour, to the effect
Whose cause was of your own device, that here
Bears fruit unlooked for; which being ripe in time
You cannot choose but taste of, nor may we
But do the season's bidding, and the queen's
Who weeps at heart to know it.—Disarm these men;
Take you the prisoners to your present ward
And hence again to London; here meanwhile
Some week or twain their lady must lie close
And with a patient or impatient heart
Expect an end and word of judgment: I
Must with Sir William back to Chartley straight
And there make inquisition ere day close
What secret serpents of what treasons hatched
May in this lady's papers lurk, whence we
Must pluck the fangs forth of them yet unfleshed,
And lay these plots like dead and strangled snakes
Naked before the council.

MARY STUART. I must go?

GORGES. Madam, no help; I pray your pardon.

MARY STUART.

Aye?

Had I your pardon in this hand to give,
And here in this my vengeance—Words, and words!
God, for thy pity! what vile thing is this
That thou didst make of woman? even in death,
As in the extremest evil of all our lives,
We can but curse or pray, but prate and weep,
And all our wrath is wind that works no wreck,
And all our fire as water. Noble sirs,
We are servants of your servants, and obey
The beck of your least groom; obsequiously,
We pray you but report of us so much,
Submit us to you. Yet would I take farewell,
May it not displease you, for old service' sake,
Of one my servant here that was, and now
Hath no word for me; yet I blame him not,
Who am past all help of man; God witness me,
I would not chide now, Gilbert, though my tongue
Had strength yet left for chiding, and its edge
Were yet a sword to smite with, or my wrath
A thing that babes might shrink at; only this
Take with you for your poor queen's true last word,
That if they let me live so long to see
The fair wife's face again from whose soft side,
Now labouring with your child, by violent hands
You are reft perforce for my sake, while I live
I will have charge of her more carefully
Than of mine own life's keeping, which indeed
I think not long to keep, nor care, God knows,
How soon or how men take it. Nay, good friend,
Weep not; my weeping time well-nigh past,
And theirs whose eyes have too much wept for me

Should last no longer. Sirs, I give you thanks
For thus much grace and patience shown of you,
My gentle gaolers, towards a queen unqueened
Who shall nor get nor crave again of man
What grace may rest in him to give her. Come,
Bring me to bonds again, and her with me
That hath not stood so nigh me all these years
To fall ere life doth from my side, or take
Her way to death without me till I die.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.
WALSINGHAM.

SCENE I.—*Windsor Castle.*

QUEEN ELIZABETH *and* SIR FRANCIS WALSINGHAM.

ELIZABETH. What will ye make me? Let the council
know

I am yet their loving mistress, but they lay
Too strange a burden on my love who send
As to their servant word what ways to take,
What sentence of my subjects given subscribe
And in mine own name utter. Bid them wait;
Have I not patience? and was never quick
To teach my tongue the deadly word of death,
Lest one day strange tongues blot my fame with blood;
The red addition of my sister's name
Shall brand not mine.

WALSINGHAM. God grant your mercy shown
Mark not your memory like a martyr's red
With pure imperial heart's-blood of your own
Shed through your own sweet-spirited height of heart
That held your hand from justice.

ELIZABETH. I would rather
Stand in God's sight so signed with mine own blood

ELIZABETH.

Aye, still dumb?

WALSINGHAM. Dumb for all good the pains can get
of him;

Had he drunk dry the chalice of his craft
Brewed in design abhorred of even his friends
With poisonous purpose toward your majesty,
He had kept scarce harder silence.

ELIZABETH.

Poison? aye—

That should be still the churchman's household sword
Or saintly staff to bruise crowned heads from far
And break them with his precious balms that smell
Rank as the jaws of death, or festal fume
When Rome yet reeked with Borgia; but the rest
Had grace enow to grant me for goodwill
Some death more gracious than a rat's? God wot,
I am bounden to them, and will charge for this
The hangman thank them heartily; they shall not
Lack daylight means to die by. God, meseems,
Will have me not die darkling like a dog,
Who hath kept my lips from poison and my heart
From shot of English knave or Spanish, both
Dubbed of the devil or damned his doctors, whom
My riddance from all ills that plague man's life
Should have made great in record; and for wage
Your Ballard hath not better hap to fee
Than Lopez had or Parry. Well, he lies
As dumb in bonds as those lead dogs in earth,
You say, but of his fellows newly ta'en
There are that keep not silence: what say these?
Pour in mine ears the poison of their plot
Whose fangs have stung the silly snakes to death.

WALSINGHAM. The first a souldier, Savage, in these wars

That sometime serving sought a traitor's luck
Under the prince Farnese, then of late
At Rheims was tempted of our traitors there,
Of one in chief, Gifford the seminarist,
My smock-faced spy's good uncle, to take off
Or the earl of Leicester or your gracious self;
And since his passage hither, to confirm
His hollow-hearted hardihood, hath had
Word from this doctor more solicitous yet
Sent by my knave his nephew, who of late
Was in the seminary of so deadly seed
Their reader in philosophy, that their head,
Even Cardinal Allen, holds for just and good
The purpose laid upon his hand; this man
Makes yet more large confession than of this,
Saying from our Gilbert's trusty mouth he had
Assurance that in Italy the Pope
Hath levies raised against us, to set forth
For seeming succour toward the Parmesan,
But in their actual aim bent hither, where
With French and Spaniards in one front of war
They might make in upon us; but from France
No foot shall pass for inroad on our peace
Till—so they phrase it—by these Catholics here
Your majesty be taken, or——

ELIZABETH.

No more——

But only taken? springed but bird-like? Ha!
They are something tender of our poor personal chance—
Temperately tender: yet I doubt the springe
Had haply maimed me no less deep than life
Sits next the heart most mortal. Or—so be it
I slip the springe—what yet may shackle France,

Hang weights upon their purpose who should else
Be great of heart against us? They take time
Till I be taken—or till what signal else
As favourable?

WALSINGHAM. Till she they serve be brought
Safe out of Paulet's keeping.

ELIZABETH. Aye? they know him
So much my servant, and his guard so good,
That sound of strange feet marching on our soil
Against us in his prisoner's name perchance
Might from the walls wherein she sits his guest
Raise a funereal echo? Yet I think
He would not dare—what think'st thou might he dare
Without my word for warrant? If I knew
This——

WALSINGHAM. It should profit not your grace to
know
What may not be conceivable for truth
Without some stain on honour.

ELIZABETH. Nay, I say not
That I would have him take upon his hand
More than his trust may warrant: yet have men,
Good men, for very truth of their good hearts
Put loyal hand to work as perilous—well,
God wot I would not have him so transgress—
If such be called transgressors.

WALSINGHAM. Let the queen
Rest well assured he shall not. So far forth
Our swordsman Savage witnesses of these
That moved him toward your murder but in trust
Thereby to bring invasion . . . sea:
Which one more gently natured of his birth,

Tichborne, protests with very show of truth
That he would give no ear to, knowing, he saith,
The miseries of such conquest: nor, it seems,
Heard this man aught of murderous purpose bent
Against your highness.

ELIZABETH. Naught? why then, again,
To him I am yet more bounden, who may think,
Being found but half my traitor, at my hands
To find but half a hangman.

WALSINGHAM. Nay, the man
Herein seems all but half his own man, being
Made merely out of stranger hearts and brains
Their engine of conspiracy; for thus
Forsooth he pleads, that Babington his friend
First showed him how himself was wrought upon
By one man's counsel and persuasion, one
Held of great judgment, Ballard, on whose head
All these lay all their forfeit.

ELIZABETH. Yet shall each
Pay for himself red coin of ransom down
In costlier drops than gold is. But of these
Why take we thought? their natural-subject blood
Can wash not out their sanguine-sealed attempt,
Nor leave us marked as tyrant: only she
That is the head and heart of all your fears
Whose hope or fear is England's, quick or dead,
Leaves or imperilled or impeached of blood
Me that with all but hazard of mine own,
God knows, would yet redeem her. I will write
With mine own hand to her privily,—what else?—
Saying, if by word as privy from her hand
She will confess her treasonous practices,

They shall be wrapped in silence up, and she
By judgment live unscathed.

WALSINGHAM. Being that she is,
So surely will she deem of your great grace,
And see it but as a snare set wide, or net
Spread in the bird's sight vainly.

ELIZABETH. Why, then, well:
She, casting off my grace, from all men's grace
Cuts off herself, and even aloud avows
By silence and suspect of jealous heart
Her manifest foul conscience: on which proof
I will proclaim her to the parliament
So self-convicted. Yet I would not have
Her name and life by mortal evidence
Touched at the trial of them that now shall die
Or by their charge attainted: lest myself
Fall in more peril of her friends than she
Stands yet in shot of judgment.

WALSINGHAM. Be assured,
Madam, the process of their treasons judged
Shall tax not her before her trial-time
With public note of clear complicity
Even for that danger's sake which moves you.

ELIZABETH. Me
So much it moves not for my mere life's sake
Which I would never buy with fear of death
As for the general danger's and the shame's
Thence cast on queenship and on womanhood
By mean of such a murderess. But, for them,
I would the merited manner of their death
Might for more note of ter. be referred
To me and to my council: these at least

Shall hang for warning in the world's wide eye
More high than common traitors, with more pains
Being ravished forth of their more villainous lives
Than feed the general throat of justice. Her
Shall this too touch, whom none that serves henceforth
But shall be sure of hire more terrible
Than all past wage of treason.

WALSINGHAM.

Why, so far

As law gives leave——

ELIZABETH.

What prat'st thou me of law?

God's blood! is law for man's sake made, or man
For law's sake only, to be held in bonds,
Led lovingly like hound in huntsman's leash
Or child by finger, not for help or stay,
But hurt and hindrance? Is not all this land
And all its hope and surety given to time
Of sovereignty and freedom, all the fame
And all the fruit of manhood hence to be,
More than one rag or relic of its law
Wherewith all these lie shackled? as too sure
Have states no less than ours been done to death
With gentle counsel and soft-handed rule
For fear to snap one thread of ordinance
Though thence the state were strangled.

WALSINGHAM.

Madam, yet

There need no need be here of law's least breach,
That of all else is worst necessity—
Being such a mortal medicine to the state
As poison drunk to expel a feverish taint
Which air or sleep might purge as easily.

ELIZABETH. Aye, but if air be poison-struck with
plague

Or sleep to death lie palsied, fools were they,
 Faint hearts and faithless, who for health's fair sake
 Should fear to cleanse air, pierce and probe the trance
 With purging fire or iron. Have your way.
 God send good end of all this, and procure
 Some mean whereby mine enemies' craft and his
 May take no feet but theirs in their own toils,
 And no blood shed be innocent as mine.

SCENE II.—*Chartley.*

MARY BEATON *and* SIR AMYAS PAULET.

PAULET. You should do well to bid her less be
 moved

Who needs fear less of evil. Since we came
 Again from Tixall this wild mood of hers
 Hath vexed her more than all men's enmities
 Should move a heart more constant. Verily,
 I thought she had held more rule upon herself
 Than to call out on beggars at the gate
 When she rode forth, crying she had nought to give,
 Being all as much a beggar too as they,
 With all things taken from her.

MARY BEATON. Being so served,
 In sooth she should not show nor shame nor spleen:
 It was but seventeen days ye held her there
 Away from all attendance, as in bonds
 Kept without change of raiment, and to find,
 Being thence haled hither ~~then~~, no nobler use,
 But all her papers plundered—then her keys

By force of violent threat wrung from the hand
She scarce could stir to help herself abed:
These were no matters that should move her.

PAULET.

None,

If she be clean of conscience, whole of heart,
Nor else than pure in purpose, but maligned
Of men's suspicions: how should one thus wronged
But hold all hard chance good to approve her case
Blameless, give praise for all, turn all to thanks
That might unload her of so sore a charge,
Despoiled not, but disburdened? Her great wrath
Pleads hard against her, and itself spake loud
Alone, ere other witness might unseal
Wrath's fierce interpretation: which ere long
Was of her secretaries expounded.

MARY BEATON.

Sir,

As you are honourable, and of equal heart
Have shown such grace as man being manful may
To such a piteous prisoner as desires
Nought now but what may hurt not loyalty
Though you comply therewith to comfort her,
Let her not think your spirit so far incensed
By wild words of her mistress cast on you
In heat of heart and bitter fire of spleen
That you should now close ears against a prayer
Which else might fairly find them open.

PAULET.

Speak

More short and plainly: what I well may grant
Shall so seem easiest granted.

MARY BEATON.

There should be

No cause I think to seal your lips up, though
I crave of them but so much breath as may

Give mine ear knowledge of the witness borne
(If aught of witness were against her borne)
By those her secretaries you spake of.

PAULET.

This

With hard expostulation was drawn forth
At last of one and other, that they twain
Had writ by record from their lady's mouth
To Babington some letter which implies
Close conscience of his treason, and goodwill
To meet his service with complicity:
But one thing found therein of deadliest note
The Frenchman swore they set not down, nor she
Bade write one word of favour nor assent
Answering this murderous motion toward our queen:
Only, saith he, she held herself not bound
For love's sake to reveal it, and thereby
For love of enemies do to death such friends
As only for her own love's sake were found
Fit men for murderous treason: and so much
Her own hand's transcript of the word she sent
Should once produced bear witness of her.

MARY BEATON.

Aye?

How then came this withholden?

PAULET.

If she speak

But truth, why, truth should sure be manifest,
And shall, with God's good will, to good men's joy
That wish not evil: as at Featheringay
When she shall come to trial must be tried
If it be truth or no: for which assay
You shall do toward her well and faithfully
To bid her presently prepare her soul
That it may there make answer.

MARY BEATON.

Presently?

PAULET. Upon the arraignment of her friends who
stand

As 'twere at point of execution now
Ere sentence pass upon them of their sin.
Would you no more with me?

MARY BEATON.

I am bounden to you

For thus much tidings granted.

PAULET.

So farewell. [*Exit.*]

MARY BEATON. So fare I well or ill as one who
knows

He shall not fare much further toward his end.
Here looms on me the landmark of my life
That I have looked for now some score of years
Even with long-suffering eagerness of heart
And a most hungry patience. I did know,
Yea, God, thou knowest I knew this all that while,
From that day forth when even these eyes beheld
Fall the most faithful head in all the world,
Toward her most loving and of me most loved,
By doom of hers that was so loved of him
He could not love me nor his life at all
Nor his own soul nor aught that all men love,
Nor could fear death nor very God, or care
If there were aught more merciful in heaven
Than love on earth had been to him. Chastelard
I have not had the name upon my lips
That stands for sign of love the truest in man
Since first love made him sacrifice of men,
This long sad score of years retributive
Since it was cast out of her heart and mind
Who made it mean a dead thing; nor, I think,

Will she remember it before she die
More than in France the memories of old friends
Are like to have yet forgotten; but for me,
Haply thou knowest, so death not all be death,
If all these years I have had not in my mind
Through all these chances this one thought in all,
That I shall never leave her till she die.
Nor surely now shall I much longer serve
Who fain would lie down at her foot and sleep,
Fain, fain have done with waking. Yet my soul
Knows, and yet God knows, I would set not hand
To such a work as might put on the time
And make death's foot more forward for her sake:
Yea, were it to deliver mine own soul
From bondage and long-suffering of my life,
I would not set mine hand to work her wrong.
Tempted I was—but hath God need of me
To work his judgment, bring his time about,
Approve his justice if the word be just
That whoso doeth shall suffer his own deed,
Bear his own blow, to weep tears back for tears,
And bleed for bloodshed? God should spare me this
That once I held the one good hope on earth,
To be the mean and engine of her end
Or some least part at least therein: I prayed,
God, give me so much grace—who now should pray,
Tempt me not, God. My heart swelled once to know
I bore her death about me; as I think
Indeed I bear it: but what need hath God
That I should clench his doom with craft of mine?
What needs the wrath of her Elizabeth
Be blown aflame with mere past writing read,

Still fret for ignorance how long here we stay
As men abiding judgment?

MARY BEATON. Now not long,
He tells me, need we think to tarry; since
The time and place of trial are set, next month
To hold it in the castle of Fotheringay.

MARY STUART. Why, he knows well I were full
easily moved
To set forth hence; there must I find more scope
To commune with the ambassador of France
By letter thence to London: but, God help,
Think these folk truly, doth she verily think,
What never man durst yet nor woman dreamed,
May one that is nor man nor woman think,
To bring a queen born subject of no laws
Here in subjection of an alien law
By foreign force of judgment? Were she wise,
Might she not have me privily made away?
And being nor wise nor valiant but of tongue,
Could she find yet foolhardiness of heart
Enough to attain the rule of royal rights
With murderous madness? I will think not this
Till it be proven indeed.

MARY BEATON. A month come round,
This man protests, will prove it.

MARY STUART. Aye! protests?
What protestation of what protestant
Can unmake law that was of God's mouth made,
Unwrite the writing of the world, unsay
The general saying of ages? If I go,
Compelled of God's hand constrained of man's,
Yet God shall bid me not nor man enforce

My tongue to plead before them for my life.
I had rather end as kings before me, die
Rather by shot or stroke of murderous hands,
Than so make answer once in face of man
As one brought forth to judgment. Are they mad,
And she most mad for envious heart of all,
To make so mean account of me? Methought,
When late we came back hither soiled and spent
And sick with travel, I had seen their worst of wrong
Full-faced, with its most outrage: when I found
My servant Curle's young new-delivered wife
Without priest's comfort and her babe unblessed
A nameless piteous thing born ere its time,
And took it from the mother's arms abed
And bade her have good comfort, since myself
Would take all charge against her husband laid
On mine own head to answer; deeming not
Man ever durst bid answer for myself
On charge as mortal: and mine almoner gone,
Did I not crave of Paulet for a grace
His chaplain might baptise me this poor babe,
And was denied it, and with mine own hands
For shame and charity moved to christen her
There with scant ritual in his heretic sight
By mine own woful name, whence God, I pray,
For her take off its presage? I misdeemed,
Who deemed all these and yet far more than these
For one born queen indignities enough,
On one crowned head enough of buffets: more
Hath time's hand laid upon me: yet I keep
Faith in one word I spake to Paulet, saying
Two things were mine though I stood spoiled of all

As of my letters and my privy coin
 By pickpurse hands of office: these things yet
 Might none take thievish hold upon to strip
 His prisoner naked of her natural dower,
 The blood yet royal running here unspilled
 And that religion which I think to keep
 Fast as this royal blood until I die.
 So where at last and howsoe'er I fare
 I need not much take thought, nor thou for love
 Take of thy mistress pity; yet meseems
 They dare not work their open will on me:
 But God's it is that shall be done, and I
 Find end of all in quiet. I would sleep
 On this strange news of thine, that being awake
 I may the freshlier front my sense thereof
 And thought of life or death. Come in with me.

SCENE III. — *Tyburn.*

A Crowd of Citizens.

1ST CITIZEN. Is not their hour yet on? Men say
 the queen

Bade spare no jot of torment in their end
 That law might lay upon them

2ND CITIZEN.

Truth it is,

To spare what scourge soe'er man's justice may
 Twist for such caitiff traitors were to grieve
 God's with mere inobservance Hear you not
 How yet the loud lewd braggards of their side
 Keep heart to threaten that for all this foil

They are not foiled indeed, but yet the work
Shall prosper with deliverance of their queen
And death for her of ours, though they should give
Of their own lives for one an hundredfold?

3RD CITIZEN. These are bold mouths; one that
shall die to-day,

Being this last week arraigned at Westminster,
Had no such heart, they say, to his defence,
Who was the main head of their treasons.

1ST CITIZEN.

Aye,

And yesterday, if truth belie not him,
Durst with his doomed hand write some word of prayer
To the queen's self, her very grace, to crave
Grace of her for his gracelessness, that she
Might work on one too tainted to deserve
A miracle of compassion, whence her fame
For pity of sins too great for pity of man
Might shine more glorious than his crime showed foul
In the eye of such a mercy.

2ND CITIZEN.

Yet men said

He spake at his arraignment soberly
With clear mild looks and gracious gesture, showing
The purport of his treasons in such wise
That it seemed pity of him to hear them, how
All their beginnings and proceedings had
First head and fountain only for their spring
From ill persuasions of that poisonous priest
Who stood the guiltiest near, by this man's side
Approved a valiant villain. Barnwell next,
Who came but late from Ireland here to court,
Made simply protestation of design
To work no personal ill against the queen

Nor paint rebellion's face as murder's red
With blood imperial: Tichborne then avowed
He knew the secret of their aim, and kept,
And held forsooth himself no traitor; yet
In the end would even plead guilty, Donne with him,
And Salisbury, who not less professed he still
Stood out against the killing of the queen,
And would not hurt her for a kingdom: so,
When thus all these had pleaded, one by one
Was each man bid say fairly, for his part,
Why sentence should not pass: and Ballard first,
Who had been so sorely racked he might not stand,
Spake, but as seems to none effect: of whom
Said Babington again, he set them on,
He first, and most of all him, who believed
This priest had power to assoil his soul alive
Of all else mortal treason: Ballard then,
As in sad scorn—*Yea, Master Babington,*
Quoth he, lay all upon me, but I wish
For you the shedding of my blood might be
The saving of your life: howbeit, for that,
Say what you will; and I will say no more.
Nor spake the swordsman Savage aught again,
Who, first arraigned, had first avowed his cause
Guilty: nor yet spake Tichborne aught: but Donne
Spake, and the same said Barnwell, each had sinned
For very conscience only: Salisbury last
Besought the queen remission of his guilt.
Then spake Sir Christopher Hatton for the rest
That sat with him commissioners, and showed
How by dark doctrine of the seminaries
And instance most of Ballard had been brought

To extreme destruction here of body and soul
 A sort of brave youths otherwise endowed
 With goodly gifts of birthright: and in fine
 There was the sentence given that here even now
 Shows seven for dead men in our present sight
 And shall bring six to-morrow forth to die.

Enter BABINGTON, BALLARD (carried in a chair), TICHBORNE, SAVAGE, BARNWELL, TILNEY, and ABINGTON, guarded: Sheriff, Executioner, Chaplain, &c.

1ST CITIZEN. What, will they speak?

2ND CITIZEN. Aye; each hath leave in turn
 To show what mood he dies in toward his cause.

BALLARD. Sirs, ye that stand to see us take our
 doom,

I being here given this grace to speak to you
 Have but my word to witness for my soul,
 That all I have done and all designed to do
 Was only for advancement of true faith
 To furtherance of religion: for myself
 Aught would I never, but for Christ's dear church
 Was mine intent all wholly, to redeem
 Her sore affliction in this age and land,
 As now may not be yet: which knowing for truth,
 I am readier even at heart to die than live.
 And dying I crave of all men pardon whom
 My doings at all have touched, or who thereat
 Take scandal; and forgiveness of the queen
 If on this cause I have offended her.

SAVAGE. The like say I, that have no skill in
 speech,
 But heart enough with faith at heart to die,

Seeing but for conscience and the common good,
And no preferment but this general weal,
I did attempt this business.

BARNWELL.

I confess

That I, whose seed was of that hallowed earth
Whereof each pore hath sweated blood for Christ,
Had note of these men's drifts, which I deny
That ever I consented with or could
In conscience hold for lawful. That I came
To spy for them occasions in the court
And there being noted of her majesty
She seeing mine eyes peer sharply like a man's
That had such purpose as she wist before
Prayed God that all were well—if this were urged,
I might make answer, it was not unknown
To divers of the council that I there
Had matters to solicit of mine own
Which thither drew me then: yet I confess
That Babington, espying me thence returned,
Asked me what news: to whom again I told,
Her majesty had been abroad that day,
With all the circumstance I saw there. Now
If I have done her majesty offence
I crave her pardon: and assuredly
If this my body's sacrifice might yet
Establish her in true religion, here
Most willingly should this be offered up.

TILNEY. I came not here to reason of my faith,
But to die simply like a Catholic, praying
Christ give our queen Elizabeth long life,
And warning all youth born take heed by me.

ABINGTON. I likewise, and if aught I have erred in
aught

I crave but pardon as for ignorant sin,
Holding at all points firm the Catholic faith;
And all things charged against me I confess,
Save that I ever sought her highness' death:
In whose poor kingdom yet ere long I fear
Will be great bloodshed.

SHERIFF.

Seest thou, Abington,

Here all these people present of thy kind
Whose blood shall be demanded at thy hands
If dying thou hide what might endanger them?
Speak therefore, why or by what mortal mean
Should there be shed such blood?

ABINGTON.

All that I know

You have on record: take but this for sure,
This country lives for its iniquity
Loathed of all countries, and God loves it not.
Whereon I pray you trouble me no more
With questions of this world, but let me pray
And in mine own wise make my peace with God.

BABINGTON. For me, first head of all this enterprise,
I needs must make this record of myself,
I have not conspired for profit, but in trust
Of men's persuasions whence I stood assured
This work was lawful which I should have done
And meritorious as toward God; for which
No less I crave forgiveness of my queen
And that my brother may possess my lands
In heritage else forfeit with my head.

TICHBORNE. Good countrymen and my dear friends,
you look

For something to be said of me, that am
But an ill orator; and my text is worse.
Vain were it to make full discourse of all
This cause that brings me hither, which before
Was all made bare, and is well known to most
That have their eyes upon me: let me stand
For all young men, and most for those born high,
Their present warning here: a friend I had,
Aye, and a dear friend, one of whom I made
No small account, whose friendship for pure love
To this hath brought me: I may not deny
He told me all the matter, how set down,
And ready to be wrought; which always I
Held impious, and denied to deal therein:
But only for my friend's regard was I
Silent, and verified a saying in me,
Who so consented to him. Ere this thing chanced,
How brotherly we twain lived heart in heart
Together, in what flourishing estate,
This town well knows: of whom went all report
Through her loud length of Fleetstreet and the Strand
And all parts else that sound men's fortunate names,
But Babington and Tichborne? that therein
There was no haughtiest threshold found of force
To brave our entry; thus we lived our life,
And wanted nothing we might wish for: then,
For me, what less was in my head, God knows,
Than high state matters? Give me now but leave
Scarce to declare the miseries I sustained
Since I took knowledge of this action, whence
To his estate I well may liken mine,
Who could forbear not one forbidden thing

To enjoy all else afforded of the world:
The terror of my conscience hung on me;
Who, taking heed what perils girt me, went
To Sir John Peters hence in Essex, there
Appointing that my horses by his mean
Should meet me here in London, whence I thought
To flee into the country: but being here
I heard how all was now bewrayed abroad:
Whence Adam-like we fled into the woods
And there were taken. My dear countrymen,
Albeit my sorrows well may be your joy,
Yet mix your smiles with tears: pity my case,
Who, born out of an house whose name descends
Even from two hundred years ere English earth
Felt Norman heel upon her, were it yet
Till this mishap of mine unspotted. Sirs,
I have a wife, and one sweet child: my wife,
My dear wife Agnes: and my grief is there;
And for six sisters too left on my hand:
All my poor servants were dispersed, I know,
Upon their master's capture: all which things
Most heartily I sorrow for: and though
Nought might I less have merited at her hands,
Yet had I looked for pardon of my fault
From the queen's absolute grace and clemency;
That the unexpired remainder of my years
Might in some sort have haply recompensed
This former guilt of mine whereof I die:
But seeing such fault may find not such release
Even of her utter mercies, heartily
I crave at least of her and all the world
Forgiveness, and to God commend my soul,

And to men's memory this my penitence
Till our death's record die from out the land.

1ST CITIZEN. God pardon him! Stand back: what
ail these knaves

To drive and thrust upon us? Help me, sir;
I thank you: hence we take them full in view:
Hath yet the hangman there his knife in hand?

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

BURGHLEY.

SCENE I.—*The Presence-Chamber in Fotheringay Castle.*
At the upper end, a chair of state as for QUEEN ELIZABETH; opposite, in the centre of the hall, a chair for MARY STUART. The Commissioners seated on either side along the wall: to the right, the Earls, with LORD CHANCELLOR BROMLEY and LORD TREASURER BURGHLEY; to the left, the Barons, with the Knights of the Privy Council, among them WALSINGHAM and PAULET; POPHAM, EGERTON, and GAWDY, as Counsel for the Crown. Enter MARY STUART, supported by SIR ANDREW MELVILLE, and takes her place.

MARY STUART. Here are full many men of counsel
met;

Not one for me. [*The Chancellor rises.*

BROMLEY. Madam, this court is held
To make strait inquisition as by law
Of what with grief of heart our queen has heard,
A plot upon her life, against the faith
Here in her kingdom stablished: on which cause
Our charge it is to exact your answer here
And put to proof your guilt or innocence.

MARY STUART (*rising*). Sirs, whom by strange constraint I stand before,

My lords, and not my judges, since no law
Can hold to mortal judgment answerable
A princess free-born of all courts on earth,
I rise not here to make response as one
Responsible toward any for my life
Or of mine acts accountable to man,
Who see none higher save only God in heaven:
I am no natural subject of your land
That I should here plead as a criminal charged,
Nor in such wise appear I now: I came
On your queen's faith to seek in England help
By trothplight pledged me: where by promise-breach
I am even since then her prisoner held in ward:
Yet, understanding by report of you
Some certain things I know not of to be
Against me brought on record, by my will
I stand content to hear and answer these.

BROMLEY. Madam, there lives none born on earth
 so high

Who for this land's laws' breach within this land
Shall not stand answerable before those laws.

BURGHLEY. Let there be record of the prisoner's
 plea

And answer given such protest here set down,
And so proceed we to this present charge.

GAWDY. My lords, to unfold by length of circumstance

The model of this whole conspiracy
Should lay the pattern of all reasons bare
That ever brought high state in danger: this

No man there lives among us but hath heard,
How certain men of our queen's household folk
Being wrought on by persuasion of their priests
Drew late a bond between them, binding these
With others of their faith accomplices
Directed first of Anthony Babington
By mean of six for execution chosen
To slay the queen their mistress, and thereon
Make all her trustiest men of trust away;
As my lord treasurer Burghley present here,
Lord Hunsdon, and Sir Francis Walsingham,
And one that held in charge awhile agoe
This lady now on trial, Sir Francis Knowles.
That she was hereto privy, to her power
Approving and abetting their device,
It shall not stand us in much need to show
Whose proofs are manifoldly manifest
On record written of their hands and hers.

MARY STUART. Of all this I know nothing: Babington

I have used for mine intelligencer, sent
With letters charged at need, but never yet
Spake with him, never writ him word of mine
As privy to these close conspiracies
Nor word of his had from him. Never came
One harmful thought upon me toward your queen,
Nor knowledge ever that of other hearts
Was harm designed against her. Proofs, ye say,
Forsooth ye hold to impeach me: I desire
But only to behold and handle them
If they in sooth of sense be tangible
More than mere air and shadow.

BURGHLEY.

Let the clerk

Produce those letters writ from Babington.

MARY STUART. What then? it may be such were
writ of him:

Be it proved that they came ever in my hands.

If Babington affirm so much, I say

He, or who else will say it, lies openly.

GAWDY. Here is the man's confession writ, and
hereBallard's the Jesuit, and the soldier's here,
Savage, that served with Parma.

MARY STUART.

What of these?

Traitors they were, and traitor-like they lied.

GAWDY. And here the last her letter of response
Confirming and approving in each point
Their purpose, writ direct to Babington.MARY STUART. My letter? none of mine it is: per-
chance

It may be in my cipher character'd,

But never came from or my tongue or hand:

I have sought mine own deliverance, and thereto

Solicited of my friends their natural help:

Yet certain whom I list not name there were,

Whose offers made of help to set me free

Receiving, yet I answered not a word.

Howbeit, desiring to divert the storm

Of persecution from the church, for this

To your queen's grace I have made most earnest suit:

But for mine own part I would purchase not

This kingdom with the meanest one man's death

In all its commonalty, much less the queen's.

Many there be have dangerously designed

Things that I knew not: yea, but very late
There came a letter to my hand which craved
My pardon if by enterprise of some
Were undertaken aught unknown of me:
A cipher lightly may one counterfeit,
As he that vaunted him of late in France
To be my son's base brother: and I fear
Lest this, for aught mine ignorance of it knows,
May be that secretary's fair handiwork
Who sits to judge me, and hath practised late,
I hear, against my son's life and mine own.
But I protest I have not so much as thought
Nor dreamed upon destruction of the queen:
I had rather spend most gladly mine own life
Than for my sake the Catholics should be thus
Afflicted only in very hate of me
And drawn to death so cruel as these tears
Gush newly forth to think of.

BURGHLEY.

Here no man

Who hath showed himself true subject to the state
Was ever for religion done to death:
But some for treason, that against the queen
Upheld the pope's bull and authority.

MARY STUART. Yet have I heard it otherwise affirmed
And read in books set forth in print as much.

BURGHLEY. They that so write say too the queen
hath here

Made forfeit of her royal dignity.

WALSINGHAM. Here I call God to record on my part
That personally or as a private man
I have done nought misbeseeeming honesty,
Nor as I bear a public person's place

Done aught thereof unworthy. I confess
 That, being right careful of the queen's estate
 And safety of this realm, I have curiously
 Searched out the practices against it: nay,
 Herein had Ballard offered me his help,
 I durst not have denied him; yea, I would
 Have recompensed the pains he had taken. Say
 I have practised aught with him, why did he not,
 To save his life, reveal it?

MARY STUART.

Pray you, sir,

Take no displeasure at me: truth it is
 Report has found me of your dealings, blown
 From lip to ear abroad, wherein myself
 I put no credit: and could but desire
 Yourself would all as little make account
 Of slanders flung on me. Spies, sure, are men
 Of doubtful credit, which dissemble things
 Far other than they speak. Do not believe
 That I gave ever or could give consent
 Once to the queen's destruction: I would never,
 These tears are bitter witness, never would
 Make shipwreck of my soul by compassing
 Destruction of my dearest sister.

GAWDY.

This

Shall soon by witness be disproved: as here
 Even by this letter from Charles Paget's hand
 Transcribed, which Curle, our secretary hath borne
 Plain witness you received, touching a league
 Betwixt Mendoza and Ballard, who conferred
 Of this land's foreordained invasion, thence
 To give you freedom.

MARY STUART.

What of this? ye shoot

Wide of the purpose: this approves not me
Consenting to the queen's destruction.

GAWDY.

That

Stands proven enough by word of Babington
Who dying avowed it, and by letters passed
From him to you, whom he therein acclaims
As his most dread and sovereign lady and queen,
And by the way makes mention passingly
Of a plot laid by transference to convey
This kingdom to the Spaniard.

MARY STUART.

I confess

There came a priest unto me, saying if I
Would not herein bear part I with my son
Alike should be debarred the inheritance:
His name ye shall not have of me: but this
Ye know, that openly the Spaniard lays
Claim to your kingdom, and to none will give
Place ever save to me.

BURGHLEY.

Still stands the charge

On written witness of your secretaries
Great on all points against you.

MARY STUART.

Wherefore then

Are not these writers with these writings brought
To outface me front to front? For Gilbert Curle,
He is in the Frenchman's hands a waxen toy,
Whom the other, once mine uncle's secretary,
The cardinal's of Lorraine, at his mere will
Moulds, turns, and tempers: being himself a knave
That may be hired or scared with peril or coin
To swear what thing men bid him. Truth again
Is this that I deny not, seeing myself
Against all right held fast in English ward,

I have sought all help where I might hope to find:

Which thing that I dispute not, let this be
The sign that I disclaim no jot of truth
In all objected to me. For the rest,
All majesty that moves in all the world
And all safe station of all princes born
Fall, as things unrespected, to the ground,
If on the testimony of secretaries
And on their writings merely these depend,
Being to their likeness thence debased: for me,
Nought I delivered to them but what first
Nature to me delivered, that I might
Recover yet at length my liberty.
I am not to be convicted save alone
By mine own word or writing. If these men
Have written toward the queen my sister's hurt
Aught, I wist nought of all such writ at all:
Let them be put to punishment: I am sure,
Were these here present, they by testimony
Would bring me clear of blame.

GAWDY.

Yet by their mean

They could not in excuse of you deny
That letters of communion to and fro
Have passed between you and the Spaniard, whence
What should have come o England and the queen
These both well know, and with what messages
Were English exiles entertained of you
By mean of these men, of your secretaries,
Confirmed and cherished in conspiracy
For this her kingdom's overthrow: in France
Paget and Morgan, traitors in design

Of one close mind with you, and in your name
Cheered hence for constant service.

MARY STUART.

That I sought

Comfort and furtherance of all Catholic states
By what mean found soever just and good,
Your mistress from myself had note long since
And open warning: uncompelled I made
Avowal of such my righteous purpose, nor
In aught may disavow it. Of these late plots
No proof is here to attain mine innocence,
Who dare all proof against me: Babington
I know not of, nor Ballard, nor their works,
But kings my kinsmen, powers that serve the church,
These I confess my comforters, in hope
Held fast of their alliance. Yet again
I challenge in the witness of my words
The notes writ of these letters here alleged
In mine own hand: if these ye bring not forth,
Judge all good men if I be not condemned
In all your hearts already, who perchance
For all this pageant held of lawless law
Have bound yourselves by pledge to speak me dead:
But I would have you look into your souls,
Remembering how the theatre of the world
Is wider, in whose eye ye are judged that judge,
Than this one realm of England.

BURGHLEY.

Toward that realm

Suffice it here that, madam, you stand charged
With deadly purpose: being of proven intent
To have your son conveyed to Spain, and give
The title you pretend upon our crown
Up with his wardship to King Philip.

MARY STUART.

Nay,

I have no kingdom left to assign, nor crown
Whereof to make conveyance: yet is this
But lawful, that of all things which are mine
I may dispose at pleasure, and to none
Stand on such count accountable.

BURGHLEY.

So be it

So far as may be: but your ciphers sent
By Curle's plain testimony to Babington,
To the lord Lodovic, and to Fernihurst,
Once provost on your part in Edinburgh
By mean of Grange your friend his father-in-law,
Speak not but as with tongue imperial, nor
Of import less than kingdoms.

MARY STUART.

Surely, sir,

Such have I writ, and many; nor therein
Beyond my birth have trespassed, to commend
That lord you speak of, and another, both
My friends in faith, to a cardinal's dignity,
And that, I trust, without offence: except
It be not held as lawful on my part
To commune with the chiefest of my creed
By written word on matters of mine own
As for your queen with churchfolk of her kind.

BURGHLEY. Well were it, madam, that with some of
yours

You had held less close communion: since by proof
Reiterated from those your secretaries
It seems you know right well that Morgan, who
Sent Parry privily to despatch the queen,
And have assigned him annual pension.

MARY STUART.

This

I know not, whether or no your charge be truth,
But I do know this Morgan hath lost all
For my sake, and in honour sure I am
That rather to relieve him I stand bound
Than to revenge an injury done your queen
By one that lives my friend, and hath deserved
Well at mine hands: yet, being not bound to this,
I did affright the man from such attempts
Of crimes against her, who contrariwise
Hath out of England openly assigned
Pensions to Gray my traitor, and the Scots
Mine adversaries, as also to my son,
To hire him to forsake me.

BURGHLEY.

Nay, but seeing

By negligence of them that steered the state
The revenues of Scotland sore impaired
Somewhat in bounty did her grace bestow
Upon your son the king, her kinsman: whom
She would not, being to her so near of blood,
Forget from charity. No such help it was
Nor no such honest service that your friends
Designed you, who by letters hither writ
To Paget and Mendoza sent as here
Large proffers of strange aid from oversea
To right you by her ruin.

MARY STUART.

Here was nought

Aimed for your queen's destruction: nor is this
Against me to be charged, that foreign friends
Should labour for my liberty. Thus much
At sundry times I have signified aloud
By open message to her, that I would still
Seek mine own freedom. Who shall bar me this?

Who tax me with unreason, that I sent
Unjust conditions on my part to be
To her propounded, which now many times
Have alway found rejection? yea, when even
For hostages I proffered in my stead
To be delivered up with mine own son
The duke of Guise's, both to stand in pledge
That nor your queen nor kingdom should through me
Take aught of damage; so that hence by proof
I see myself utterly from all hope
Already barred of freedom. But I now
Am dealt with most unworthily, whose fame
And honourable repute are called in doubt
Before such foreign men of law as may
By miserable conclusions of their craft
Draw every thin and shallow circumstance
Out into compass of a consequence:
Whereas the anointed heads and consecrate
Of princes are not subject to such laws
As private men are. Next, whereas ye are given
Authority but to look such matters through
As tend to the hurt of your queen's person, yet
Here is the cause so handled, and so far
Here are my letters wrested, that the faith
Which I profess, the immunity and state
Of foreign princes, and their private right
Of mutual speech by word reciprocate
From royal hand to royal, all in one
Are called in question, and myself by force
Brought down beneath my kingly dignity
And made to appear before judgment-seat
As one held guilty; to none end but this,

All to none other purpose but that I
Might from all natural favour of the queen
Be quite excluded, and my right cut off
From claim hereditary: whereas I stand
Here of mine own goodwill to clear myself
Of all objected to me, lest I seem
To have aught neglected in the full defence
Of mine own innocency and honour. This
Would I bring likewise in your minds, how once
This queen herself of yours, Elizabeth,
Was drawn in question of conspiracy
That Wyatt raised against her sister, yet
Ye know she was most innocent. For me,
With very heart's religion I affirm,
Though I desire the Catholics here might stand
Assured of safety, this I would not yet
Buy with the blood and death of anyone.
And on mine own part rather would I play
Esther than Judith; for the people's sake
To God make intercession, than deprive
The meanest of the people born of life.
Mine enemies have made broad report aloud
That I was irreligious: yet the time
Has been I would have learnt the faith ye hold,
But none would suffer me, for all I sought,
To find such teaching at your teachers' hands;
As though they cared not what my soul became.
And now at last, when all ye can ye have done
Against me, and have barred me from my right,
Ye may chance fail yet of your cause and hope.
To God and to the princes of my kin
I make again appeal, from you again

Record my protestation, and reject
All judgment of your court: I had rather die
Thus undishonoured, even a thousand deaths,
Than so bring down the height of majesty;
Yea, and thereby confess myself as bound
By all the laws of England, even in faith
Of things religious, who could never learn
What manner of laws these were: I am destitute
Of counsellors, and who shall be my peers
To judge my cause through and give doom thereon
I am ignorant wholly, being an absolute queen,
And will do nought which may impair that state
In me nor other princes, nor my son;
Since yet my mind is not dejected, nor
Will I sink under my calamity.

My notes are taken from me, and no man
Dares but step forth to be my advocate.
I am clear from all crime done against the queen,
I have stirred not up one man against her: yet,
Albeit of many dangers overpast
I have thoroughly forewarned her, still I found
No credit, but have always been contemned,
Though nearest to her in blood allied. When late
Ye made association, and thereon
An act against their lives on whose behalf,
Though innocent even as ignorance of it, aught
Might be contrived to endangering of the queen
From foreign force abroad, or privy plots
At home of close rebellion, I foresaw
That, whatsoever of peril so might rise
Or more than all this for religion's sake,
My many mortal enemies in her court

Should lay upon me all the charge, and I
Bear the whole blame of all men. Certainly,
I well might take it hardly, nor without
High cause, that such confederacy was made
With mine own son, and I not knowing: but this
I speak not of, being not so grieved thereat
As that mine own dear sister, that the queen,
Is misinformed of me, and I, now kept
These many years in so strait prison, and grown
Lame of my limbs, have lien neglected, nor
For all most reasonable conditions made
Or proffered to redeem my liberty
Found audience or acceptance: and at last
Here am I set with none to plead for me.
But this I pray, that on this matter of mine
Another meeting there be kept, and I
Be granted on my part an advocate
To hold my cause up; or that seeing ye know
I am a princess, I may be believed
By mine own word, being princely: for should I
Stand to your judgment, who most plainly I see
Are armed against me strong in prejudice,
It were mine extreme folly: more than this,
That ever I came to England in such trust
As of the plighted friendship of your queen
And comfort of her promise. Look, my lords,
Here on this ring: her pledge of love was this
And surety sent me when I lay in bonds
Of mine own rebels once: regard it well:
In trust of this I came amongst you: none
But sees what faith I have found to keep this trust.

BURGHLEY. Whereas I bear a double person, being

Commissioner first, then counsellor in this cause,
From me as from the queen's commissioner here
Receive a few words first. Your protest made
Is now on record, and a transcript of it
Shall be delivered you. To us is given
Under the queen's hand our authority, whence
Is no appeal, this grant being ratified
With the great seal of England; nor are we
With prejudice come hither, but to judge
By the straight rule of justice. On their part,
These the queen's learned counsel here in place
Do level at nothing else but that the truth
May come to light, how far you have made offence
Against the person of the queen. To us
Full power is given to hear and diligently
Examine all the matter, though yourself
Were absent: yet for this did we desire
To have your presence here, lest we might seem
To have derogated from your honour: nor
Designed to object against you anything
But what you knew of, or took part therein,
Against the queen's life bent. For this were these
Your letters brought in question, but to unfold
Your aim against her person, and therewith
All matters to it belonging; which perforce
Are so with other matters interlaced
As none may sever them. Hence was there need
Set all these forth, not parcels here and there,
Whose circumstances do the assurance give
Upon what points you dealt with Babington.

MARY STUART. The circumstances haply may find
proof,

But the fact never. Mine integrity
Nor on the memory nor the credit hangs
Of these my secretaries, albeit I know
They are men of honest hearts: yet if they have
Confessed in fear of torture anything
Or hope of guerdon and impunity,
It may not be admitted, for just cause,
Which I will otherwhere allege. Men's minds
Are with affections diversly distraught
And borne about of passion: nor would these
Have ever avowed such things against me, save
For their own hope and profit. Letters may
Toward other hands be outwardly addressed
Than they were writ for: yea, and many times
Have many things been privily slipped in mine
Which from my tongue came never. Were I not
Reft of my papers, and my secretary
Kept from me, better might I then confute
These things cast up against me.

BURGHLEY.

But there shall
Be nothing brought against you save what last
Stands charged, even since the nineteenth day of June:
Nor would your papers here avail you, seeing
Your secretaries, and Babington himself,
Being of the rack unquestioned, have affirmed
You sent those letters to him; which though yourself
Deny, yet whether more belief should here
On affirmation or negation hang
Let the commissioners judge. But, to come back,
This next I tell you as a counsellor,
Time after time you have put forth many things
Propounded for your freedom; that all these

Have fallen all profitless, 'tis long of you,
 And of the Scots; in no wise of the queen.
 For first the lords of Scotland, being required,
 Flatly refused, to render up the king
 In hostage: and when treaty last was held
 Upon your freedom, then was Parry sent
 By your dependant Morgan privily
 To make the queen away by murder.

MARY STUART.

Ah!

You are my adversary.

BURGHLEY.

Yea, surely I am

To the queen's adversaries an adversary.
 But now hereof enough: let us proceed
 Henceforth to proofs.

MARY STUART.

I will not hear them.

BURGHLEY.

Yet

Hear them will we.

MARY STUART. And in another place

I too will hear them, and defend myself.

GAWDY. First let your letters to Charles Paget speak,
 Wherein you show him there is none other way
 For Spain to bring the Netherlands again
 To the old obedience, but by setting up
 A prince in England that might help his cause:
 Then to Lord Paget, to bring hastilier
 His forces up for help to invade this land:
 And Cardinal Allen's letter, letting you
 His most dread sovereign lady, and signifying
 The matter to the prince of Parma's care
 To be commended.

MARY STUART. I am so sore beset

I know not how by point and circumstance

To meet your manifold impeachments: this
I see through all this charge for evil truth,
That Babington and my two secretaries
Have even to excuse themselves accused me: yet,
As touching that conspiracy, this I say,
Of those six men for execution chosen
I never heard: and all the rest is nought
To this pretended purpose of your charge.
For Cardinal Allen, whatsoe'er he have writ,
I hold him for a reverend prelate, so
To be esteemed, no more: none save the Pope
Will I acknowledge for the church's head
And sovereign thence on thought or spirit of mine:
But in what rank and place I stand esteemed
Of him and foreign princes through the world
I know not: neither can I hinder them
By letters writ of their own hearts and hands
To hail me queen of England. As for those
Whose duty and plain allegiance sworn to me
Stands flawed in all men's sight, my secretaries,
These merit no belief. They which have once
Forsworn themselves, albeit they swear again
With oaths and protestations ne'er so great,
Are not to be believed. Nor may these men
By what sworn oath soever hold them bound
In court of conscience, seeing they have sworn to me
Their secrecy and fidelity before,
And are no subjects of this country. Nau
Hath many times writ other than I bade,
And Curle sets down whate'er Nau bids him write
But for my part I am ready in all to bear
The burden of their fault, save what may lay.

A blot upon mine honour. Haply too
 These things did they confess to save themselves;
 Supposing their avowal could hurt not me,
 Who, being a queen, they thought, good ignorant men,
 More favourably must needs be dealt withal.
 For Ballard, I ne'er heard of any such,
 But of one Hallard once that proffered me
 Such help as I would none of, knowing this man
 Had vowed his service too to Walsingham.

GAWDY. Next, from your letters to Mendoza, writ
 By Curle, as freely his confession shows,
 In privy cipher, take these few brief notes
 For perfect witness of your full design.
 You find yourself, the Spaniard hears thereby,
 Sore troubled what best course to take anew
 For your affairs this side the sea, whereon
 Charles Paget hath a charge to impart from you
 Some certain overtures to Spain and him
 In your behalf, whom you desire with prayer
 Show freely what he thinks may be obtained
 Thus from the king his master. One point more
 Have you reserved thereon depending, which
 On your behalf you charge him send the king
 Some secret word concerning, no man else,
 If this be possible, being privy to it:
 Even this, that seeing your son's great obstinacy
 In heresy, and foreseeing too sure thereon
 Most imminent danger and harm thence like to ensue
 To the Catholic church, he coming to bear rule
 Within this kingdom, you are resolved at heart
 In case your son be not reclaimed again
 To the Catholic faith before your death, whercof

Plainly you say small hope is yours so long
As he shall bide in Scotland, to give up
To that said king, and grant in absolute right,
Your claim upon succession to this crown,
By your last will made; praying him on this cause
From that time forth wholly to take yourself
Into his keeping, and therewith the state
And charge of all this country: which, you say,
You cannot for discharge of conscience think
That you could put into a prince's hands
More zealous for your faith, and abler found
To build it strong upon this side again,
Even as through all parts else of Christendom.
But this let silence keep in secret, lest
Being known it be your dowry's loss in France,
And open breach in Scotland with your son,
And in this realm of England utterly
Your ruin and destruction. On your part
Next is he bidden thank his lord the king
For liberal grace and sovereign favour shown
Lord Paget and his brother, which you pray him
Most earnestly to increase, and gratify
Poor Morgan with some pension for your sake
Who hath not for your sake only endured so much
But for the common cause. Likewise, and last,
Is one he knows commended to his charge
With some more full supply to be sustained
Than the entertainment that yourself allot
According to the little means you have.

BURGHLEY. Hereon stands proof apparent of that
charge
Which you but now put by, that you design

To give your right supposed upon this realm
 Into the Spaniard's hold; and on that cause
 Lie now at Rome Allen and Parsons, men
 Your servants and our traitors.

MARY STUART. No such proof
 Lives but by witness of revolted men,
 My traitors and your helpers; who to me
 Have broken their allegiance bound by oath.
 When being a prisoner clothed about with cares
 I languished out of hope of liberty,
 Nor yet saw hope to effect of those things aught
 Which many and many looked for at my hands,
 Declining now through age and sickness, this
 To some seemed good, even for religion's sake,
 That the succession here of the English crown
 Should or be stablished in the Spanish king
 Or in some English Catholic. And a book
 Was sent to me to avow the Spaniard's claim;
 Which being of me allowed not, some there were
 In whose displeasure thence I fell; but now
 Seeing all my hope in England desperate grown,
 I am fully minded to reject no aid
 Abroad, but resolute to receive it.

WALSINGHAM. Sirs,
 Bethink you, were the kingdom so conveyed,
 What should become of you and all of yours,
 Estates and honours and posterities,
 Being to such hands delivered.

BURGHLEY. Nay, but these
 In no such wise can be conveyed away
 By personal will, but by success we right
 Still must descend in heritage of law.

Whereto your own words witness, saying if this
Were blown abroad your cause were utterly
Lost in all hearts of English friends. Therein
Your thoughts hit right: for here in all men's minds
That are not mad with envying at the truth
Death were no loathlier than a stranger king.
If you would any more, speak: if not aught,
This cause is ended.

MARY STUART. I require again
Before a full and open parliament
Hearing, or speech in person with the queen,
Who shall, I hope, have of a queen regard,
And with the council. So, in trust hereof,
I crave a word with some of you apart,
And of this main assembly take farewell.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

ELIZABETH.

SCENE I.—*Richmond.*

WALSINGHAM *and* DAVISON.

WALSINGHAM. It is God's wrath, too sure, that holds
her hand;

His plague upon this people, to preserve
By her sole mean her deadliest enemy, known
By proof more potent than approval of law
In all points guilty, but on more than all
Toward all this country dangerous. To take off
From the court held last month at Fotheringay
Authority with so full commission given
To pass upon her judgment—suddenly
Cut short by message of some three lines writ
With hurrying hand at midnight, and despatched
To maim its work upon the second day,
What else may this be in so wise a queen
But madness, as a brand to scar the brain
Of one by God infatuate? yea, and now
That she receives the French ambassador
With one more special envoy from his king,
Except their message touch spleen with fire
And so undo itself, we cannot tell

What doubt may work upon her. Had we but
 Some sign more evident of some private seal
 Confirming toward her by more personal proof
 The Scottish queen's inveteracy, for this
 As for our country plucked from imminent death
 We might thank God: but with such gracious words
 Of piteous challenge and imperial plea
 She hath wrought by letter on our mistress' mind,
 We may not think her judgment so could slip,
 Borne down with passion or forgetfulness,
 As to leave bare her bitter root of heart
 And core of evil will there labouring.

DAVISON.

Yet

I see no shade of other surety cast
 From any sign of likelihood. It were
 Not shameful more than dangerous, though she bade,
 To have her prisoner privily made away;
 Yet stands the queen's heart wellnigh fixed hereon
 When aught may seem to fix it; then as fast
 Wavers, but veers to that bad point again
 Whence blowing the wind blows down her honour, nor
 Brings surety of life with fame's destruction.

WALSINGHAM.

Aye,

We are no Catholic keepers, and his charge
 Need fear no poison in our watch-dog's fang,
 Though he show honest teeth at her, to threat
 Thieves' hands with loyal danger.

Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH, *attended by* BURGHLEY, LEI-
 CESTER, HUNSDON, HATTON, *and others of the*
Council.

ELIZABETH.

No, my lords,

We are not so weak of wit as men that need

Be counselled of their enemies. Blame us not
That we accuse your friendship on this cause
Of too much fearfulness: France we will hear,
Nor doubt but France shall hear us all as loud
As friend or foe may threaten or protest,
Of our own heart advised, and resolute more
Than hearts that need men's counsel. Bid them in.

Enter CHÂTEAUNEUF and BELLIÈVRE, attended.

From our fair cousin of France what message, sirs?

BELLIÈVRE. I, madam, have in special charge to lay
The king's mind open to your majesty,
Which gives my tongue first leave of speech more free
Than from a common envoy. Sure it is,
No man more grieves at what his heart abhors,
The counsels of your highness' enemies,
Than doth the king of France: wherein how far
The queen your prisoner have borne part, or may
Seem of their works partaker, he can judge
Nought: but much less the king may understand
What men may stand accusers, who rise up
Judge in so great a matter. Men of law
May lay their charges on a subject: but
The queen of Scotland, dowager queen of France,
And sister made by wedlock to the king,
To none being subject, can be judged of none
Without such violence done in rule as breaks
Prerogative of princes. Nor may man
That looks upon your present majesty
In such clear wise apparent, and retains
Remembrance of your name through all the world
For virtuous wisdom, bring his mind to think
That England's royal-souled Elizabeth,

Being set so high in fame, can so forget
Wise Plato's word, that common souls are wrought
Out of dull iron and slow lead, but kings
Of gold untempered with so vile alloy
As makes all metal up of meaner men.
But say this were not thus, and all men's awe
Were from all time toward kingship merely vain,
And state no more worth reverence, yet the plea
Were nought which here your ministers pretend,
That while the queen of Scots lives you may live
No day that knows not danger. Were she dead,
Rather might then your peril wax indeed
To shape and sense of heavier portent, whom
The Catholic states now threat not, nor your land,
For this queen's love, but rather for their faith's,
Whose cause, were she by violent hand removed,
Could be but furthered, and its enterprise
Put on more strong and prosperous pretext; yea,
You shall but draw the invasion on this land
Whose threat you so may think to stay, and bring
Imminence down of inroad. Thus far forth
The queen of Scots hath for your person been
Even as a targe or buckler which has caught
All intercepted shafts against your state
Shot, or a stone held fast within your hand,
Which, if you cast it thence in fear or wrath
To smite your adversary, is cast away,
And no mean left therein for menace. If
You lay but hand upon her life, albeit
There were that counselled this, her death will make
Your enemies weapons of their own despair
And give their whetted wrath excuse and edge

More plausibly to strike more perilously.
Your grace is known for strong in foresight: we
These nineteen years of your wise reign have kept
Fast watch in France upon you: of those claims
Which lineally this queen here prisoner may
Put forth on your succession have you made
The stoutest rampire of your rule: and this
Is grown a byword with us, that their cause
Who shift the base whereon their policies lean
Bows down toward ruin: and of loyal heart
This will I tell you, madam, which hath been
Given me for truth assured of one whose place
Affirms him honourable, how openly
A certain prince's minister that well
May stand in your suspicion says abroad
That for his master's greatness it were good
The queen of Scots were lost already, seeing
He is well assured the Catholics here should then
All wholly range them on his master's part.
Thus long hath reigned your highness happily,
Who have loved fair temperance more than violence:

now,

While honour bids have mercy, wisdom holds
Equal at least the scales of interest. Think
What name shall yours be found in time far hence,
Even as you deal with her that in your hand
Lies not more subject than your fame to come
In men's repute that shall be. Bid her live,
And ever shall my lord stand bound to you
And you for ever firm in praise of men.

ELIZABETH. I am sorry. r, you are hither come
from France

Upon no better errand. I appeal
To God for judge between my cause and hers
Whom here you stand for. In this realm of mine
The queen of Scots sought shelter, and therein
Hath never found but kindness; for which grace
In recompense she hath three times sought my life.
No grief that on this head yet ever fell
Shook ever from mine eyes so many a tear
As this last plot upon it. I have read
As deep I doubt me in as many books
As any queen or prince in Christendom,
Yet never chanced on aught so strange and sad
As this my state's calamity. Mine own life
Is by mere nature precious to myself,
And in mine own realm I can live not safe.
I am a poor lone woman, girt about
With secret enemies that perpetually
Lay wait for me to kill me. From your king
Why have not I my traitor to my hands
Delivered up, who now this second time
Hath sought to slay me, Morgan? On my part,
Had mine own cousin Hunsdon here conspired
Against the French king's life, he had found not so
Refuge of me, nor even for kindred's sake
From the edge of law protection: and this cause
Needs present evidence of this man's mouth.

BELLIÈVRE. Madam, there stand against the queen
of Scots

Already here in England on this charge
So many and they so dangerous witnesses
No need can be to bring one over more:
Nor can the king show such unnatural heart

As to send hither a knife for enemies' hands
To cut his sister's throat. Most earnestly
My lord expects your resolution: which
If we receive as given against his plea,
I must crave leave to part for Paris hence.
Yet give me pardon first if yet once more
I pray your highness be assured, and so
Take heed in season, you shall find this queen
More dangerous dead than living. Spare her life,
And not my lord alone but all that reign
Shall be your sureties in all Christian lands
Against all scathe of all conspiracies
Made on her party: while such remedies' ends
As physic states with bloodshedding, to cure
Danger by death, bring fresh calamities
Far oftener forth than the old are healed of them
Which so men thought to medicine. To refrain
From that red-handed way of rule, and set
Justice no higher than mercy sits beside,
Is the first mean of kings' prosperity
That would reign long: nor will my lord believe
Your highness could put off yourself so much
As to reverse and tread upon the law
That you thus long have kept and honourably:
But should this perilous purpose hold right on,
I am bounden by my charge to say, the king
Will not regard as liable to your laws
A queen's imperial person, nor will hold
Her death as but the general wrong of kings
And no more his than as his brethren's all,
But as his own and special injury done,
More than to these injurious.

ELIZABETH.

Doth your lord

Bid you speak thus?

BELLIÈVRE.

Aye, madam: from his mouth

Had I command what speech to use.

ELIZABETH.

You have done

Better to speak than he to send it. Sir,

You shall not presently depart this land

As one denied of mere discourtesy.

I will return an envoy of mine own

To speak for me at Paris with the king.

You shall bear back a letter from my hand,

And give your lord assurance, having seen,

I cannot be so frightened with men's threats

That they shall not much rather move my mind

To quicken than to slack the righteous doom

Which none must think by menace to put back,

Or daunt it with defiance. Sirs, good day.

[Exeunt Ambassadors.]

I were as one belated with false lights

If I should think to steer my darkling way

By twilight furtherance of their wiles and words.

Think you, my lords, France yet would have her live?

BURGHLEY. If there be other than the apparent
end

Hid in this mission to your majesty,

Mine envoys can by no means fathom it,

Who deal for me at Paris: fear of Spain

Lays double hand as 'twere upon the king,

Lest by removal of the queen of Scots

A way be made for peril in the claim

More potent than of Philip; and if there come

From his Farnese note of enterprise

Or danger this way tending, France will yet
Cleave to your friendship though his sister die.

ELIZABETH. So, in your mind, this half-souled brother
would

Steer any way that might keep safe his sail
Against a southern wind, which here, he thinks,
Her death might strengthen from the north again
To blow against him off our subject straits,
Made servile then and Spanish? Yet perchance
There swells behind our seas a heart too high
To bow more easily down, and bring this land
More humbly to such handling, than their waves
Bow down to ships of strangers, or their storms
To breath of any lord on earth but God.
What thinks our cousin?

HUNSDON. That if Spain or France
Or both be stronger than the heart in us
Which beats to battle ere they menace, why,
In God's name, let them rise and make their prey
Of what was England: but if neither be,
The smooth-cheeked French man-harlot, nor that hand
Which help to light Rome's fires with English limbs,
Let us not keep to make their weakness strong
A pestilence here alive in England, which
Gives force to their faint enmities, and burns
Half the heart out of loyal trust and hope
With heat that kindles treason.

ELIZABETH. By this light,
I have heard worse counsel from a wise man's tongue
Than this clear note of forthright soldiership.
How say you, Dudley, to it?

LEICESTER.

Madam, ere this

You have had my mind upon the matter, writ
But late from Holland, that no public stroke
Should fall upon this princess, who may be
By privy death more happily removed
Without impeach of majesty, nor leave
A sign against your judgment, to call down
Blame of strange kings for wrong to kingship wrought
Though right were done to justice.

ELIZABETH.

Of your love

We know it is that comes this counsel; nor,
Had we such friends of all our servants, need
Our mind be now distraught with dangerous doubts
That find no screen from dangers. Yet meseems
One doubt stands now removed, if doubt there were
Of aught from Scotland ever: Walsingham,
You should have there intelligence whereof
To make these lords with us partakers.

WALSINGHAM.

Nay,

Madam, no more than from a trustless hand
Protest and promise: of those twain that come
Hot on these Frenchmen's heels in embassy,
He that in counsel on this cause was late
One with my lord of Leicester now, to rid
By draught of secret death this queen away,
Bears charge to say as these gone hence have said
In open audience, but by personal note
Hath given me this to know, that howsoe'er
His king indeed desire her life be spared
Much may be wrought upon him, would your grace
More richly line his ragged wants with gold
And by full utterance of your parliament
Approve him heir in England.

ELIZABETH.

Aye! no more?

God's blood! what grace is proffered us at need,
 And on what mild conditions! Say I will not
 Redeem such perils at so dear a price,
 Shall not our pensioner too join hands with France
 And pay my gold with iron barter back
 At edge of sword he dares not look upon,
 They tell us, for the scathe and scare he took
 Even in this woman's womb when shot and steel
 Undid the manhood in his veins unborn
 And left his tongue's threats helpless?

WALSINGHAM.

Men there be,

Your majesty must think, who bear but ill,
 For pride of country and high-heartedness,
 To see the king they serve your servant so
 That not his mother's life and once their queen's
 Being at such point of peril can enforce
 One warlike word of his for chance of war
 Conditional against you. Word came late
 From Edinburgh that there the citizens
 With hoot and hiss had bayed him through the streets
 As he went heartless by; of whom they had heard
 This published saying, that in his personal mind
 The blood of kindred or affinity
 So much not binds us as the friendship pledged
 To them that are not of our blood: and this
 Stands clear for certain, that no breath of war
 Shall breathe from him against us though she die,
 Except his titular claim be reft from him
 On our succession: and that all his mind
 Is but to reign unpartnered with a power
 Which should weigh down that half his kingdom's weight

Left to his hand's share nominally in hold:
And for his mother, this would he desire,
That she were kept from this day to her death
Close prisoner in one chamber, never more
To speak with man or woman: and hereon
That proclamation should be made of her
As of one subject formally declared
To the English law whereby, if she offend
Again with iterance of conspiracy,
She shall not as a queen again be tried,
But as your vassal and a private head
Live liable to the doom and stroke of death.

ELIZABETH. She is bounden to him as he long since
to her,

Who would have given his kingdom up at least
To his dead father's slayer, in whose red hand
How safe had lain his life too doubt may guess,
Which yet kept dark her purpose then on him,
Dark now no more to usward. Think you then
That they belie him, whose suspicion saith
His ear and heart are yet inclined to Spain,
If from that brother-in-law that was of ours
And would have been our bridegroom he may win
Help of strange gold and foreign soldiership,
With Scottish furtherance of those Catholic lords
Who are stronger-spirited in their faith than ours,
Being harried more of heretics, as they say,
Than these within our borders, to root out
The creed there stablished now, and do to death
Its ministers, with all the lords their friends,
Lay hands on all strong places there, and rule
As prince upon their party? since he fain

From ours would be divided, and cast in
 His lot with Rome against us too, from these
 Might he but earn assurance of their faith,
 Revolting from his own. May these things be
 More than mere muttering breath of trustless lies,
 And half his heart yet hover toward our side
 For all such hope or purpose?

WALSINGHAM.

Of his heart

We know not, madam, surely; nor doth he
 Who follows fast on their first envoy sent,
 And writes to excuse him of his message here
 On her behalf apparent, but in sooth
 Aimed otherwise; the Master I mean of Gray,
 Who swears me here by letter, if he be not
 True to the queen of England, he is content
 To have his head fall on a scaffold: saying,
 To put from him this charge of embassy
 Had been his ruin, but the meaning of it
 Is modest and not menacing: whereto
 If you will yield not yet to spare the life
 So near its forfeit now, he thinks it well
 You should be pleased by some commission given
 To stay by the way his comrade and himself,
 Or bid them back.

ELIZABETH.

What man is this then, sent
 With such a knave to fellow?

WALSINGHAM.

No such knave,

But still your prisoner's friend of old time found:
 Sir Robert Melville.

ELIZABETH.

And an honest man

As faith might wish her servants: but what pledge
 Will these produce me for security

That I may spare this dangerous life and live
Unscathed of after practice?

WALSINGHAM. As I think,
The king's self and his whole nobility
Will be her personal pledges; and her son,
If England yield her to his hand in charge,
On no less strait a bond will undertake
For her safe keeping.

ELIZABETH. That were even to arm
With double power mine adversary, and make him
The stronger by my hand to do me hurt—
Were he mine adversary indeed: which yet
I will not hold him. Let them find a mean
For me to live unhurt and save her life,
It shall well please me. Say this king of Scots
Himself would give his own inheritance up
Pretended in succession, if but once
Her hand were found or any friend's of hers
Again put forth upon me for her sake,
Why, haply so might hearts be satisfied
Of lords and commons then to let her live.
But this I doubt he had rather take her life
Himself than yield up to us for pledge: and less,
'These men shall know of me, I will not take
In price of her redemption: which were else,
And haply may in no wise not be held,
To this my loyal land and mine own trust
A deadlier stroke and blast of sound more dire
Than noise of fleets invasive.

WALSINGHAM. Surely so
Would all hearts hold it, madam, in that land
That are not enemies of the land and yours;

For ere the doom had been proclaimed an hour
Which gave to death your main foe's head and theirs
Yourself have heard what fire of joy brake forth
From all your people: how their church-towers all
Rang in with jubilant acclaim of bells
The day that bore such tidings, and the night
That laughed aloud with lightning of their joy
And thundered round its triumph: twice twelve hours
This tempest of thanksgiving roared and shone
Sheer from the Solway's to the Channel's foam
With light as from one festal-flaming hearth
And sound as of one trumpet: not a tongue
But praised God for it, or heart that leapt not up,
Save of your traitors and their country's: these
Withered at heart and shrank their heads in close,
As though the bright sun's were a basilisk's eye,
And light, that gave all others comfort, flame
And smoke to theirs of hell's own darkness, whence
Such eyes were blinded or put out with fire.

ELIZABETH. Yea, I myself, I mind me, might not sleep
Those twice twelve hours thou speak'st of. By God's light,
Be it most in love of me or fear of her
I know not, but my people seems in sooth
Hot and anhungered on this trail of hers:
Nor is it a people bloody-minded, used
To lap the life up of an enemy's vein
Who bleeds to death unweaponed: our good hounds
Will course a quarry soldierlike in war,
But rage not hangmanlike upon the prey,
To flesh their fangs on limbs that strive not: yet
Their hearts are hotter on t. course than mine,
Which most was deadliest aimed at.

WALSINGHAM.

Even for that

How should not theirs be hot as fire from hell
To burn your danger up and slay that soul
Alive that seeks it? Thinks your majesty
There beats a heart where treason hath not turned
All English blood to poison, which would feel
No deadlier pang of dread more deathful to it
To hear of yours endangered than to feel
A sword against its own life bent, or know
Death imminent as darkness overhead
That takes the noon from one man's darkening eye
As must your death from all this people's? You
Are very England: in your light of life
This living land of yours walks only safe,
And all this breathing people with your breath
Breathes unenslaved, and draws at each pulse in
Freedom: your eye is light of theirs, your word
As God's to comfort England, whose whole soul
Is made with yours one, and her witness you
That Rome or hell shall take not hold on her
Again till God be wroth with us so much
As to reclaim for heaven the star that yet
Lights all your land that looks on it, and gives
Assurance higher than danger dares assail
Save in this lady's name and service, who
Must now from you take judgment.

ELIZABETH.

Must! by God,

I know not *must* but as a word of mine,
My tongue's and not mine ear's familiar. Sirs,
Content yourselves to know this much of us,
Or having known remember, that we sent
The Lord of Buckhurst and our servant Beale

To acquaint this queen our prisoner with the doom
Confirmed on second trial against her, saying
Her word can weigh not down the weightier guilt
Approved upon her, and by parliament
Since fortified with sentence. Yea, my lords,
Ye should forget not how by message then
I bade her know of me with what strong force
Of strenuous and invincible argument
I am urged to hold no more in such delay
The process of her execution, being
The seed-plot of these late conspiracies,
Their author and chief motive: and am told
That if I yield not mine the guilt must be
In God's and in the whole world's suffering sight
Of all the miseries and calamities
To ensue on my refusal: whence, albeit
I know not yet how God shall please to incline
My heart on that behalf, I have thought it meet
In conscience yet that she should be forewarned,
That so she might bethink her of her sins
Done both toward God offensive and to me
And pray for grace to be true penitent
For all these faults: which, had the main fault reached
No further than mine own poor person, God
Stands witness with what truth my heart protests
I freely would have pardoned. She to this
Makes bitter answer as of desperate heart
All we may wreak our worst upon her; whom
Having to death condemned, we may fulfil
Our wicked work, and God in Paradise
With just atonement shall receive her. This
Ye see is all the pardon she will ask,

Being only, and even as 'twere with prayer, desired
To crave of us forgiveness: and thereon
Being by Lord Buckhurst charged on this point home
That by her mean the Catholics here had learnt
To hold her for their sovereign, on which cause
Nor my religion nor myself might live
Uncharged with danger while her life should last,
She answering gives God thanks aloud to be
Held of so great account upon his side,
And in God's cause and in the church of God's
Rejoicingly makes offering of her life;
Which I, God knows how unrejoicingly,
Can scarce, ye tell me, choose but take, or yield
At least for you to take it. Yet, being told
It is not for religion she must die,
But for a plot by compass of her own
Laid to dethrone me and destroy, she casts
Again this answer barbed with mockery back,
She was not so presumptuous born, to aspire
To two such ends yet ever: yea, so far
She dwelt from such desire removed in heart,
She would not have me suffer by her will
The fillip of a finger: though herself
Be persecuted even as David once
And her mishap be that she cannot so
Fly by the window forth as David: whence
It seems she likens us to Saul, and looks
Haply to see us as on Mount Gilboa fallen,
Where yet, for all the shooters on her side,
Our shield shall be not vilely cast away,
As of one unanointed. Yet, my lords,
If England might but by my death attain

A state more flourishing with a better prince,
Gladly would I lay down my life; who have
No care save only for my people's sake
To keep it: for myself, in all the world
I see no great cause why for all this coil
I should be fond to live or fear to die.
If I should say unto you that I mean
To grant not your petition, by my faith,
More should I so say haply than I mean:
Or should I say I mean to grant it, this
Were, as I think, to tell you of my mind
More than is fit for you to know: and thus
I must for all petitionary prayer
Deliver you an answer answerless.
Yet will I pray God lighten my dark mind
That being illumined it may thence foresee
What for his church and all this commonwealth
May most be profitable: and this once known,
My hand shall halt not long behind his will.

SCENE II.—*Fotheringay.*

SIR AMYAS PAULET *and* SIR DREW DRURY.

PAULET. I never gave God heartier thanks than these
I give to have you partner of my charge
Now most of all, these letters being to you
No less designed than me, and you in heart
One with mine own upon them. Certainly,
When I put hand to pen this morning past
That Master Davison by mine evidence
Might note what sore inquietudes I had

To increase my griefs before of body and mind,
I looked for no such word to cut off mine
As these to us both of Walsingham's and his.
Would rather yet I had cause to still complain
Of those unanswered letters two months past
Than thus be certified of such intents
As God best knoweth I never sought to know,
Or search out secret causes: though to hear
Nothing at all did breed, as I confessed,
In me some hard conceits against myself,
I had rather yet rest ignorant than ashamed
Of such ungracious knowledge. This shall be
Fruit as I think of dread wrought on the queen
By those seditious rumours whose report
Blows fear among the people lest our charge
Escape our trust, or as they term it now
Be taken away,—such apprehensive tongues
So phrase it—and her freedom strike men's hearts
More deep than all these flying fears that say
London is fired of Papists, or the Scots
Have crossed in arms the Border, or the north
Is risen again rebellious, or the Guise
Is disembarked in Sussex, or that now
In Milford Haven rides a Spanish fleet—
All which, albeit but footless floating lies,
May all too easily smite and work too far
Even on the heart most royal in the world
That ever was a woman's.

DRURY.

Good my friend,
These noises come without a thunderbolt
In such dense air of dusk expectancy
As all this land lies under; nor will some

Doubt or think much to say of those reports
They are broached and vented of men's credulous mouths
Whose ears have caught them from such lips as meant
Merely to strike more terror in the queen
And wring that warrant from her hovering hand
Which falters yet and flutters on her lip
While the hand hangs and trembles half advanced
Upon that sentence which, the treasurer said,
Should well ere this have spoken, seeing it was
More than a full month old and four days more
When he so looked to hear the word of it
Which yet lies sealed of silence.

PAULET.

Will you say,

Or any as wise and loyal, say or think
It was but for a show, to scare men's wits,
They have raised this hue and cry upon her flight
Supposed from hence, to waken Exeter
With noise from Honiton and Sampfield spread
Of proclamation to detain all ships
And lay all highways for her day and night,
And send like precepts out four manner of ways
From town to town, to make in readiness
Their armour and artillery, with all speed,
On pain of death, for London by report
Was set on fire? though, God be therefore praised,
We know this is not, yet the noise hereof
Were surely not to be neglected, seeing
There is, meseems, indeed no readier way
To levy forces for the achieving that
Which so these lewd reporters feign to fear.

DRURY. Why, in such naughty matters and such mists
Wise men may think what hardly fools would say,

And eyes get glimpse of more than sight hath leave
To give commission for the babbling tongue
Aloud to cry they have seen. This noise that was
Upon one Arden's flight, a traitor, whence
Fear flew last week all round us, gave but note
How lightly may men's minds take fire, and words
Take wing that have no feet to fare upon
More solid than a shadow.

PAULET.

Nay, he was

Escaped indeed: and every day thus brings
Forth its new mischief: as this last month did
Those treasons of the French ambassador
Designed against our mistress, which God's grace
Laid by the knave's mean bare to whom they sought
For one to slay her, and of the Pope's hand earn
Ten thousand blood-encrusted crowns a year
To his most hellish hire. You will not say
This too was merely fraud or vision wrought
By fear or cloudy falsehood?

DRURY.

I will say

No more or surelier than I know: and this
I know not thoroughly to the core of truth
Or heart of falsehood in it. A man may lie
Merely, or trim some bald lean truth with lies,
Or patch bare falsehood with some tatter of truth,
And each of these pass current: but of these
Which likeliest may this man's tale be who gave
Word of his own temptation by these French
To hire them such a murderer, and avowed
He held it godly cunning to comply
And bring this envoy's secretary to sight
Of one clapped up for debts in Newgate, who

Being thence released might readily, as he said,
Even by such means as once this lady's lord
Was made away with, make the queen away
With powder fired beneath her bed—why, this,
Good sooth, I guess not; but I doubt the man
To be more liar than fool, and yet, God wot,
More fool than traitor; most of all intent
To conjure coin forth of the Frenchman's purse
With tricks of mere effrontery: thus at least
We know did Walsingham esteem of him:
And if by Davison held of more account,
Or merely found more serviceable, and made
A mean to tether up those quick French tongues
From threat or pleading for this prisoner's life,
I cannot tell, and care not. Though the queen
Hath stayed this envoy's secretary from flight
Forth of the kingdom, and committed him
To ward within the Tower while Châteauneuf
Himself should come before a council held
At my lord treasurer's, where being thus accused
At first he cared not to confront the man,
But stood upon his office, and the charge
Of his king's honour and prerogative—
Then bade bring forth the knave, who being brought
forth

Outfaced him with insister front to front
And took the record of this whole tale's truth
Upon his soul's damnation, challenging
The Frenchman's answer in denial hereof,
That of his own mouth had this witness been
Traitorously tempted, and by personal plea
Directly drawn to treason: which awhile

By speech late uttered of her majesty
For lack of zeal in service and of care
She looked for at our hands, in that we have not
In all this time, unprompted, of ourselves
Found out some way to cut this queen's life off,
Seeing how great peril, while her enemy lives,
She is hourly subject unto: saying, she notes,
Besides a kind of lack of love to her,
Herein we have not that particular care
Forsooth of our own safeties, or indeed
Of the faith rather and the general good,
That politic reason bids; especially,
Having so strong a warrant and such ground
For satisfaction of our consciences
To Godward, and discharge of credit kept
And reputation toward the world, as is
That oath whereby we stand associated
To prosecute inexorably to death
Both with our joint and our particular force
All by whose hand and all on whose behalf
Our sovereign's life is struck at: as by proof
Stands charged upon our prisoner. So they write,
As though the queen's own will had warranted
The words that by her will's authority
Were blotted from the bond, whereby that head
Was doomed on whose behoof her life should be
By treason threatened: for she would not have
Aught pass which grieved her subjects' consciences,
She said, or might abide not openly
The whole world's view: nor would she any one
Were punished for anothe fault: and so
Cut off the plea whereon she now desires

That we should dip our secret hands in blood
With no direction given of her own mouth
So to pursue that dangerous head to death
By whose assent her life were sought: for this
Stands fixed for only warrant of such deed,
And this we have not, but her word instead
She takes it most unkindly toward herself
That men professing toward her loyally
That love that we do should in any sort,
For lack of our own duty's full discharge,
Cast upon her the burden, knowing as we
Her slowness to shed blood, much more of one
So near herself in blood as is this queen,
And one with her in sex and quality.
And these respects, they find, or so profess,
Do greatly trouble her: who hath sundry times
Protested, they assure us, earnestly,
That if regard of her good subjects' risk
Did not more move her than the personal fear
Of proper peril to her, she never would
Be drawn to assent unto this bloodshedding:
And so to our good judgments they refer
These speeches they thought meet to acquaint us
with
As passed but lately from her majesty,
And to God's guard commend us: which God knows
We should much more need than deserve of him
Should we give ear to this, and as they bid
Make heretics of these papers; which three times
You see how Davison hath enforced on us:
But they shall taste no fire for me, nor pass
Back to his hands till copies writ of them

Lie safe in mine for sons of mine to keep
In witness how their father dealt herein.

DRURY. You have done the wiselier: and what word
soe'er

Shall bid them know your mind, I am well assured
It well may speak for me too.

PAULET.

Thus it shall:

That having here his letters in my hands,
I would not fail, according to his charge,
To send back answer with all possible speed
Which shall deliver unto him my great grief
And bitterness of mind, in that I am
So much unhappy as I hold myself
To have lived to look on this unhappy day,
When I by plain direction am required
From my most gracious sovereign's mouth to do
An act which God forbiddeth, and the law.
Hers are my goods and livings, and my life,
Held at her disposition, and myself
Am ready so to lose them this next day
If it shall please her so, acknowledging
I hold them of her mere goodwill, and do not
Desire them to enjoy them but so long
As her great grace gives leave: but God forbid
That I should make for any grace of hers
So foul a shipwreck of my conscience, or
Leave ever to my poor posterity
So great a blot, as privily to shed blood
With neither law nor warrant. So, in trust
That she, of her accustomed clemency,
Will take my dutiful answer in good part,
By his good mediation, as returned

From one who never will be less in love,
Honour, obedience, duty to his queen,
Than any Christian subject living, thus
To God's grace I commit him.

DRURY.

Though I doubt

She haply shall be much more wroth hereat
Than lately she was gracious, when she bade
God treblefold reward you for your charge
So well discharged, saluting you by name
Most faithful and most careful, you shall do
Most like a wise man loyally to write
But such good words as these, whereto myself
Subscribe in heart: though being not named herein
(Albeit to both seem these late letters meant)
Nor this directed to me, I forbear
To make particular answer. And indeed,
Were danger less apparent in her life
To the heart's life of all this living land,
I would this woman might not die at all
By secret stroke nor open sentence.

PAULET.

I

Will praise God's mercy most for this of all,
When I shall see the murderous cause removed
Of its most mortal peril: nor desire
A guerdon ampler from the queen we serve,
Besides her commendations of my faith
For spotless actions and for safe regards,
Than to see judgment on her enemy done;
Which were for me that recompense indeed
Whereof she writes as one not given to all,
But for such merit reserved to crown its claim
Above all common service: nor save this

Could any treasure's promise in the world
 So ease those travails and rejoice this heart
 That hers too much takes thought of, as to read
 Her charge to carry for her sake in it
 This most just thought, that she can balance not
 The value that her grace doth prize me at
 In any weight of judgment: yet it were
 A word to me more comfortable at heart
 Than these, though these most gracious, that should speak
 Death to her death's contriver.

DRURY.

Nay, myself

Were fain to see this coil wound up, and her
 Removed that makes it: yet such things will pluck
 Hard at men's hearts that think on them, and move
 Compassion that such long strange years should find
 So strange an end: nor shall men ever say
 But she was born right royal; full of sins,
 It may be, and by circumstance or choice
 Dyed and defaced with bloody stains and black,
 Unmerciful, unfaithful, but of heart
 So fiery high, so swift of spirit and clear,
 In extreme danger and pain so lifted up,
 So of all violent things inviolable,
 So large of courage, so superb of soul,
 So sheathed with iron mind invincible
 And arms unbreached of fireproof constancy—
 By shame not shaken, fear or force or death,
 Change, or all confluence of calamities—
 And so at her worst need beloved, and still,
 Naked of help and honour when she seemed,
 As other women would be, and of hope
 Stripped, still so of herself adorable

By minds not always all ignobly mad
Nor all made poisonous with false grain of faith,
She shall be a world's wonder to all time,
A deadly glory watched of marvelling men
Not without praise, not without noble tears,
And if without what she would never have
Who had it never, pity—yet from none
Quite without reverence and some kind of love
For that which was so royal. Yea, and now
That at her prayer we here attend on her,
If, as I think, she have in mind to send
Aught written to the queen, what we may do
To further her desire shall on my part
Gladly be done, so be it the grace she craves
Be nought akin to danger.

PAULET.

It shall be

The first of all then craved by her of man,
Or by man's service done her, that was found
So harmless ever.

Enter MARY STUART and MARY BEATON.

MARY STUART.

Sirs, in time past by

I was desirous many times, ye know,
To have written to your queen: but since I have had
Advertisement of my conviction, seeing
I may not look for life, my soul is set
On preparation for another world:
Yet none the less, not for desire of life,
But for my conscience's discharge and rest,
And for my last farewell, I have at heart
By you to send her a memorial writ
Of somewhat that concerns myself, when I
Shall presently be gone out of this world.

And to remove from her, if such be there,
Suspicion of all danger in receipt
Of this poor paper that should come from me,
Myself will take the assay of it, and so
With mine own hands to yours deliver it.

PAULET. Will you not also, madam, be content
To seal and close it in my presence up?

MARY STUART. Sir, willingly: but I beseech your word
Pledged for its safe delivery to the queen.

PAULET. I plight my faith it shall be sent to her.

MARY STUART. This further promise I desire, you
will

Procure me from above certificate
It hath been there delivered.

DRURY. This is more
Than we may stand so pledged for: in our power
It is to send, but far beyond our power,
As being above our place, to promise you
Certificate or warrant.

MARY STUART. Yet I trust
Consideration may be had of me
After my death, as one derived in blood
From your queen's grandsire, with all mortal rites
According with that faith I have professed
All my life-days as I was born therein.
This is the sum of all mine askings: whence
Well might I take it in ill part of you
To wish me seal my letter in your sight,
Bewraying your hard opinion of me.

PAULET. This
Your own words well might into my mind,
That so beside my expectation made

Proffer to take my first assay for me
Of the outer part of it: for you must think
I was not ignorant that by sleight of craft
There might be as great danger so conveyed
Within the letter as without, and thus
I could not for ill thoughts of you be blamed,
Concurring with you in this jealousy:
For had yourself not moved it of yourself
Sir Drew nor I had ever thought on it.

MARY STUART. The occasion why I moved it was
but this,

That having made my custom in time past
To send sometimes some tokens to your queen,
At one such time that I sent certain clothes
One standing by advised her cause my gifts
To be tried thoroughly ere she touched them; which
I have since observed, and taken order thus
With Nau, when last he tarried at the court,
To do the like to a fur-fringed counterpane
Which at that time I sent: and as for this,
Look what great danger lies between these leaves
That I dare take and handle in my hands,
And press against my face each part of them
Held open thus, and either deadly side,
Wherein your fear smells death sown privily.

PAULET. Madam, when so you charged your secretary
Her majesty was far from doubt, I think,
Or dream of such foul dealing: and I would
Suspicion since had found no just cause given,
And then things had not been as now they are.

MARY STUART. But things are as they are, and here
I stand

Convicted, and not knowing how many hours
I have to live yet.

PAULET. Madam, you shall live
As many hours as God shall please: but this
May be said truly, that you here have been
Convicted in most honourable sort
And favourable.

MARY STUART. What favour have I found?

PAULET. Your cause hath been examined scrupulously
By many our eldest nobles of this realm,
Whereas by law you should but have been tried
By twelve men as a common person.

MARY STUART. Nay,
Your noblemen must by their peers be tried.

PAULET. All strangers of what quality soe'er
In matter of crime are only to be tried
In other princes' territories by law
That in that realm bears rule.

MARY STUART. You have your laws:
But other princes all will think of it
As they see cause; and mine own son is now
No more a child, but come to man's estate,
And he will think of these things bitterly.

DRURY. Ingratitude, whate'er he think of them,
Is odious in all persons, but of all
In mightiest personages most specially
Most hateful: and it will not be denied
But that the queen's grace greatly hath deserved
Both of yourself and of your son.

MARY STUART. What boon
Shall I acknowledge? Being in bonds, I am set
Free from the world, and therefore am I not

Was that my friends could not be heard to inform
Against my loud accusers.

PAULET. But your friend
The bishop's self of Ross, your very friend,
Hath written that this meeting was dismissed
All only in your favour: and his book
Is extant: and this favour is but one
Of many graces which her majesty
Hath for mere love extended to you.

MARY STUART. This
Is one great favour, even to have kept me here
So many years against my will.

PAULET. It was
For your own safety, seeing your countrymen
Sought your destruction, and to that swift end
Required to have you yielded up to them,
As was before said.

MARY STUART. Nay, then, I will speak.
I am not afraid. It was determined here
That I should not depart: and when I was
Demanded by my subjects, this I know,
That my lord treasurer with his own close hand
Writ in a packet which by trustier hands
Was intercepted, and to me conveyed,
To the earl of Murray, that the devil was tied
Fast in a chain, and they could keep her not,
But here she should be safely kept.

DRURY. That earl
Was even as honourable a gentleman
As I knew ever in that country bred.

MARY STUART. One of the worst men of the world
he was:

A foul adulterer, one of general lust,
A spoiler and a murderer.

DRURY. Six weeks long,
As I remember, here I saw him; where
He bore him very gravely, and maintained
The reputation even on all men's tongues
In all things of a noble gentleman:
Nor have I heard him evil spoken of
Till this time ever.

MARY STUART. Yea, my rebels here
Are honest men, and by the queen have been
Maintained.

PAULET. You greatly do forget yourself
To charge her highness with so foul a fault,
Which you can never find ability
To prove on her.

MARY STUART. What did she with the French,
I pray you, at Newhaven?

PAULET. It appears
You have conceived so hardly of the queen
My mistress, that you still inveterately
Interpret all her actions to the worst,
Not knowing the truth of all the cause: but yet
I dare assure you that her majesty
Had most just cause and righteous, in respect
As well of Calais as for other ends,
To do the thing she did, and more to have done,
Had it so pleased her to put forth her power:
And this is in you great unthankfulness
After so many favours and so great,
Whereof you will acknowledge in no wise
The least of any: though her majesty

Hath of her own grace merely saved your life,
 To the utter discontentment of the best
 Your subjects once in open parliament
 Who craved against you justice on the charge
 Of civil law-breach and rebellion.

MARY STUART.

I

Know no such matter, but full well I know
 Sir Francis Walsingham hath openly,
 Since his abiding last in Scotland, said
 That I should rue his entertainment there.

PAULET. Madam, you have not rued it, but have
 been

More honourably entertained than ever yet
 Was any other crown's competitor
 In any realm save only this: whereof
 Some have been kept close prisoners, other some
 Maimed and unnaturally disfigured, some
 Murdered.

MARY STUART. But I was no competitor:
 All I required was in successive right
 To be reputed but as next the crown.

PAULET. Nay, madam, you went further, when you
 gave
 The English arms and style, as though our queen
 Had been but an usurper on your right.

MARY STUART. My husband and my kinsmen did
 therein

What they thought good: I had nought to do with it.

PAULET. Why would you not then loyally renounce
 Your claim herein pretended, but with such
 Condition, that you might be authorised
 Next heir apparent to the crown?

MARY STUART. I have made
At sundry times thereon good proffers, which
Could never be accepted.

PAULET. Heretofore
It hath been proved unto you presently
That in the very instant even of all
Your treaties and most friendlike offers were
Some dangerous crafts discovered.

MARY STUART. You must think
I have some friends on earth, and if they have done
Anything privily, what is that to me?

PAULET. Madam, it was somewhat to you, and I
would
For your own sake you had forborne it, that
After advertisement and conscience given
Of Morgan's devilish practice, to have killed
A sacred queen, you yet would entertain
The murderer as your servant.

MARY STUART. I might do it
With as good right as ever did your queen
So entertain my rebels.

DRURY. Be advised:
This speech is very hard, and all the case
Here differs greatly.

MARY STUART. Yea, let this then be;
Ye cannot yet of my conviction say
But I by partial judgment was condemned,
And the commissioners knew my son could have
No right, were I convicted, and your queen
Could have no children of her womb; whereby
They might set up what man for king they would.

PAULET. This is in you too great forgetfulness

Of honour and yourself, to charge these lords
 With two so foul and horrible faults, as first
 To take your life by partial doom from you,
 And then bestow the kingdom where they liked.

MARY STUART. Well, all is one to me: and for my
 part

I thank God I shall die without regret
 Of anything that I have done alive.

PAULET. I would entreat you yet be sorry at least
 For the great wrong, and well deserving grief,
 You have done the queen my mistress.

MARY STUART.

Nay, thereon

Let others answer for themselves: I have
 Nothing to do with it. Have you borne in mind
 Those matters of my monies that we last
 Conferred upon together?

PAULET.

Madam, these

Are not forgotten.

MARY STUART. Well it is if aught
 Be yet at all remembered for my good.
 Have here my letter sealed and superscribed,
 And so farewell—or even as here men may.

[*Exeunt PAULET and DRURY.*]

Had I that old strength in my weary limbs
 That in my heart yet fails not, fain would I
 Fare forth if not fare better. Tired I am,
 But not so lame in spirit I might not take
 Some comfort of the winter-wasted sun
 This bitter Christmas to me, though my feet
 Were now no firmer nor more helpful found
 Than when I went but in my chair abroad
 Last weary June at Chartley. I can stand

And go now without help of either side,
And bend my hand again, thou seest, to write:
I did not well perchance in sight of these
To have made so much of this lame hand, which yet
God knows was grievous to me, and to-day
To make my letter up and superscribe
And seal it with no outward show of pain
Before their face and inquisition; yet
I care not much in player's wise piteously
To blind such eyes with feigning: though this Drew
Be gentler and more gracious than his mate
And liker to be wrought on; but at last
What need have I of men?

MARY BEATON.

What then you may

I know not, seeing for all that was and is
We are yet not at the last; but when you had,
You have hardly failed to find more help of them
And heartier service than more prosperous queens
Exact of expectation: when your need
Was greater than your name or natural state,
And wage was none to look for but of death,
As though the expectancy thereof and hope
Were more than man's prosperities, men have given
Heart's thanks to have this gift of God and you
For dear life's guerdon, even the trust assured
To drink for you the bitterness of death.

MARY STUART. Aye, one said once it must be—
some one said

I must be perilous ever, and my love
More deadly than my will was evil or good
Toward any of all these that through me should
die—

I know not who, nor when one said it: but
I know too sure he lied not.

MARY BEATON. No; I think
This was a seer indeed. I have heard of men
That under imminence of death grew strong
With mortal foresight, yet in life-days past
Could see no foot before them, nor provide
For their own fate or fortune anything
Against one angry chance of accident
Or passionate fault of their own loves or hates
That might to death betray them: such an one
Thus haply might have prophesied, and had
No strength to save himself.

MARY STUART. I know not: yet
Time was when I remembered.

MARY BEATON. It should be
No enemy's saying whom you remember not;
You are wont not to forget your enemies; yet
The word rang sadder than a friend's should fall
Save in some strange pass of the spirit or flesh
For love's sake haply hurt to death.

MARY STUART. It seems
Thy mind is bent to know the name of me
That of myself I know not.

MARY BEATON. Nay, my mind
Has other thoughts to best upon: for me
It may suffice to know the saying for true
And never care who said it.

MARY STUART. True? too sure,
God to mine heart's grief hath approved it. See,
Nor Scot nor Englishman that takes on him
The service of my sorrow but partakes

The sorrow of my service: man by man,
As that one said, they perish of me: yea,
Were I a sword sent upon earth, or plague
Bred of aerial poison, I could be
No deadlier where unwillingly I strike,
Who where I would can hurt not: Percy died
By his own hand in prison, Howard by law,
These young men with strange torments done to death,
Who should have rid me and the world of her
That is our scourge, and to the church of God
A pestilence that wastes it: all the north
Wears yet the scars engraven of civil steel
Since its last rising: nay, she saith but right,
Mine enemy, saying by these her servile tongues
I have brought upon her land mine own land's curse,
And a sword follows at my heel, and fire
Is kindled of mine eyeshot: and before,
Whom did I love that died not of it? whom
That I would save might I deliver, when
I had once but looked on him with love, or pledged
Friendship? I should have died I think long since,
That many might have died not, and this word
Had not been written of me nor fulfilled,
But perished in the saying, a prophecy
That took the prophet by the throat and slew—
As sure I think it slew him. Such a song
Might my poor servant slain before my face
Have sung before the stroke of violent death
Had fallen upon him there for my sake.

MARY BEATON.

Ah!

You think so? this remembrance was it not
That hung and hovered in your mind but now,

Moved your heart backward all unwittingly
To some blind memory of the man long dead?

MARY STUART. In sooth, I think my prophet should
have been

David.

MARY BEATON. You thought of him?

MARY STUART. An old sad thought:
The moan of it was made long since, and he
Not unremembered.

MARY BEATON. Nay, of him indeed
Record was made—a royal record: whence
No marvel is it that you forgot not him.

MARY STUART. I would forget no friends nor enemies:
these

More needs me now remember. Think'st thou not
This woman hates me deadlier—or this queen
That is not woman—than myself could hate
Except I were as she in all things? then
I should love no such woman as am I
Much more than she may love me: yet I am sure,
Or so near surety as all belief may be,
She dare not slay me for her soul's sake: nay,
Though that were made as light of as a leaf
Storm-shaken, in such stormy winds of state
As blow between us like a blast of death,
For her throne's sake she durst not, which must be
Broken to build my scaffold. Yet, God wot,
Perchance a straw's weight now cast in by chance
Might weigh my life down in the scale her hand
Holds hardly straight for trembling: if she be
Woman at all, so tempere naturally
And with such spirit and sense as thou and I,

Should I for wrath so far forget myself
As these men sometime charge me that I do,
My tongue might strike my head off. By this head
That yet I wear to swear by, if life be
Thankworthy, God might well be thanked for this
Of me or whoso loves me in the world,
That I spake never half my heart out yet,
For any sore temptation of them all,
To her or hers; nor ever put but once
My heart upon my paper, writing plain
The things I thought, heard, knew for truth of
her,

Believed or feigned—nay, feigned not to believe
Of her fierce follies fed with wry-mouthed praise,
And that vain ravin of her sexless lust
Which could not feed nor hide its hunger, curb
With patience nor allay with love the thirst
That mocked itself as all mouths mocked it. Ha,
What might the reading of these truths have wrought
Within her maiden mind, what seed have sown,
Trow'st thou, in her sweet spirit, of revenge
Toward me that showed her queenship in the glass
A subject's hand of hers had put in mine
The likeness of it loathed and laughable
As they that worshipped it with words and signs
Beheld her and bemocked her?

MARY BEATON.

Certainly,

I think that soul drew never breath alive
To whom this letter might seem pardonable
Which timely you forbore to send her.

MARY STUART.

Nay,

I doubt not I did well to keep it back—

And did not ill to write it: for God knows
It was no small ease to my heart.

MARY BEATON. But say
I had not burnt it as you bade me burn,
But kept it privily safe against a need
That I might haply sometime have of it?

MARY STUART. What, to destroy me?

MARY BEATON. Hardly, sure, to save.

MARY STUART. Why shouldst thou think to bring
me to my death?

MARY BEATON. Indeed, no man am I that love you;
nor

Need I go therefore in such fear of you
As of my mortal danger.

MARY STUART. On my life,
(Long life or short, with gentle or violent end,
I know not, and would choose not, though I might
So take God's office on me) one that heard
Would swear thy speech had in it, and subtly
mixed,

A savour as of menace, or a sound
As of an imminent ill or perilous sense
Which was not in thy meaning.

MARY BEATON. No: in mine
There lurked no treason ever; nor have you
Cause to think worse of me than loyally,
If proof may be believed on witness.

MARY STUART. Sure,
I think I have not nor I should not have:
Thy life has been the shadow cast of mine,
A present faith to serve n. present need,

A foot behind my footsteps; as long since
In those French dances that we trod, and laughed
The blithe way through together. Thou couldst sing
Then, and a great while gone it is by this
Since I heard song or music: I could now
Find in my heart to bid thee, as the Jews
Were once bid sing in their captivity
One of their songs of Sion, sing me now,
If one thou knowest, for love of that far time,
One of our songs of Paris.

MARY BEATON. ^ Give me leave

A little to cast up some wandering words
And gather back such memories as may beat
About my mind of such a song, and yet
I think I might renew some note long dumb
That once your ear allowed of.—I did pray, [Aside.
Tempt me not, God: and by her mouth again
He tempts me—nay, but prompts me, being most
just,

To know by trial if all remembrance be
Dead as remorse or pity that in birth
Died, and were childless in her: if she quite
Forget that very swan-song of thy love,
My love that wast, my love that wouldst not be,
Let God forget her now at last as I
Remember: if she think but one soft thought,
Cast one poor word upon thee, God thereby
Shall surely bid me let her live: if none,
I shoot that letter home and sting her dead.
God strengthen me to sing but these words through
Though I fall dumb at end for ever. Now—

[She sings.

*Après tant de jours, après tant de pleurs,
Soyez secourable à mon âme en peine.
Voyez comme Avril fait l'amour aux fleurs;
Dame d'amour, dame aux belles couleurs,
Dieu vous a fait belle, Amour vous fait reine.*

*Rions, je t'en prie; aimons, je le veux.
Le temps fuit et rit et ne revient guère
Pour baiser le bout de tes blonds cheveux,
Pour baiser tes cils, ta bouche et tes yeux;
L'amour n'a qu'un jour auprès de sa mère.*

MARY STUART. Nay, I should once have known that
son, thou say'st,

And him that sang it and should now be dead:
Was it—but his rang sweeter—was it not
Remy Belleau?

MARY BEATON. (My letter—here at heart!) [*Aside.*]
I think it might be—were it better writ
And courtlier phrased, with Latin spice cast in,
And a more tunable descant.

MARY STUART. Aye; how sweet
Sang all the world about those stars that sang
With Ronsard for the strong mid star of all,
His bay-bound head all glorious with grey hairs,
Who sang my birth and bridal! When I think
Of those French years, I only seem to see
A light of swords and singing, only hear
Laughter of love and lovely stress of lutes,
And in between the passion of them borne
Sound of swords crossing, as of feet
Dancing, and life and death still equally

Blithe and bright-eyed from battle. Haply now
My sometime sister, mad Queen Madge, is grown
As grave as I should be, and wears at waist
No hearts of last year's lovers any more
Enchased for jewels round her girdlestead,
But rather beads for penitence; yet I doubt
Time should not more abash her heart than mine,
Who live not heartless yet. These days like those
Have power but for a season given to do
No more upon our spirits than they may,
And what they may we know not till it be
Done, and we need no more take thought of it,
As I no more of death or life to-day.

MARY BEATON. That shall you surely need not.

MARY STUART. So I think,

Our keepers being departed: and by these,
Even by the uncourtlier as the gentler man,
I read as in a glass their queen's plain heart,
And that by her at last I shall not die.

SCENE III.—*Greenwich Palace.*

QUEEN ELIZABETH *and* DAVISON.

ELIZABETH. Thou hast seen Lord Howard? I bade
him send thee.

DAVISON. Madam,

But now he came upon me hard at hand
And by your gracious message bade me in.

ELIZABETH. The day is fair as April: hast thou been
Abroad this morning? 'Tis no winter's sun

More prosperously be plotted: nay, God knows,
I would not hold on such poor terms my life,
With such a charge upon it, as to breathe
In dread of death or treason till the day
That they should stop my trembling breath, and ease
The piteous heart that panted like a slave's
Of all vile fear for ever. So to live
Were so much hatefuller than thus to die,
I do not think that man or woman draws
Base breath of life the loathsomest on earth
Who by such purchase of perpetual fear
And deathless doubt of all in trust of none
Would shudderingly prolong it.

DAVISON. Even too well
Your servants know that greatness of your heart
Which gives you yet unguarded to men's eyes,
And were unworthier found to serve or live
Than is the unworthiest of them, did not this
Make all their own hearts hotter with desire
To be the bulwark or the price of yours
Paid to redeem it from the arrest of death.

ELIZABETH. So haply should they be whose hearts
beat true
With loyal blood: but whoso says they are
Is but a loving liar.

DAVISON. I trust your grace
Hath in your own heart no such doubt of them
As speaks in mockery through your lips.

ELIZABETH. By God,
I say much less than righteous truth might speak
Of their loud loves that ring with emptiness,
And hollow-throated loyalties whose heart

Is wind and clamorous promise. Ye desire,
 With all your souls ye swear that ye desire
 The queen of Scots were happily removed,
 And not a knave that loves me will put hand
 To the enterprise ye look for only of me
 Who only would forbear it.

DAVISON.

If your grace

Be minded yet it shall be done at all,
 The way that were most honourable and just
 Were safest, sure, and best.

ELIZABETH.

I dreamt last night

Our murderess there in hold had tasted death
 By execution of the sentence done
 That was pronounced upon her; and the news
 So stung my heart with wrath to hear of it
 That had I had a sword—look to 't, and 'ware!—
 I had thrust it through thy body.

DAVISON.

God defend!

'Twas well I came not in your highness' way
 While the hot mood was on you. But indeed
 I would know soothly if your mind be changed
 From its late root of purpose.

ELIZABETH.

No, by God:

But I were fain it could be somewise done
 And leave the blame not on me. And so much,
 If there were love and honesty in one
 Whom I held faithful and exact of care,
 Should easily be performed; but here I find
 This dainty fellow so precise a knave
 As will take all things dangerous on his tongue
 And nothing on his hand. Hot-mouthed and large
 In zeal to stuff mine ears with promises,

But perjurous in performance: did he not
Set hand among you to the bond whereby
He is bound at utmost hazard of his life
To do me such a service? Yet I could
Have wrought as well without him, had I wist
Of this faint falsehood in his heart: there is
That Wingfield whom thou wot'st of, would have done
With glad goodwill what I required of him,
And made no Puritan mouths on't.

DAVISON. Madam, yet
Far better were it all should but be done
By line of law and judgment.

ELIZABETH. There be men
Wiser than thou that see this otherwise.

DAVISON. All is not wisdom that of wise men
comes,
Nor are all eyes that search the ways of state
Clear as a just man's conscience.

ELIZABETH. Proverbs! ha?
Who made thee master of these sentences,
Prime tongue of ethics and philosophy?

DAVISON. An honest heart to serve your majesty;
Nought else nor subtler in its reach of wit
Than very simpleness of meaning.

ELIZABETH. Nay,
I do believe thee; heartily I do.
Did my lord admiral not desire thee bring
The warrant for her execution?

DAVISON. Aye,
Madam; here is it.

ELIZABETH. I would it might not be,
Or being so just were yet not necessary.

Art thou not heartily sorry—wouldst thou not,
I say, be sad—to see me sign it?

DAVISON.

Madam,

I grieve at any soul's mishap that lives,
And specially for shipwreck of a life
To you so near allied: but seeing this doom
Wrung forth from justice by necessity,
I had rather guilt should bleed than innocence.

ELIZABETH. When I shall sign, take thou this instantly
To the lord chancellor; see it straight be sealed
As quietly as he may, not saying a word,
That no man come to know it untimely: then
Send it to the earls of Kent and Shrewsbury
Who are here set down to see this justice done:
I would no more be troubled with this coil
Till all be through. But, for the place of doom,
The hall there of the castle, in my mind,
Were fitter than the court or open green.
And as thou goest betake thee on thy way
To Walsingham, where he lies sick at home,
And let him know what hath of us been done:
Whereof the grief, I fear me, shall go near
To kill his heart outright.

DAVISON.

Your majesty

Hath yet not signed the warrant.

ELIZABETH.

Ha! God's blood

Art thou from tutor of philosophy late
Grown counsellor too and more than counsellor,
To appoint me where and what this hand of mine
Shall at thy beck obsequiously subscribe
And follow on thy finger? By God's death,
What if it please me now not sign at all?

This letter of my kinswoman's last writ
Hath more compulsion in it, and more power
To enforce my pity, than a thousand tongues
Dictating death against her in mine ear
Of mine own vassal subjects. Here but now
She writes me she thanks God with all her heart
That it hath pleased him by the mean of me
To make an end of her life's pilgrimage,
Which hath been weary to her: and doth not ask
To see its length drawn longer, having had
Too much experience of its bitterness:
But only doth entreat me, since she may
Look for no favour at their zealous hands
Who are first in councils of my ministry,
That only I myself will grant her prayers;
Whereof the first is, since she cannot hope
For English burial with such Catholic rites
As here were used in time of the ancient kings,
Mine ancestors and hers, and since the tombs
Lie violated in Scotland of her sires,
That so soon ever as her enemies
Shall with her innocent blood be satiated,
Her body by her servants may be borne
To some ground consecrated, there to be
Interred: and rather, she desires, in France,
Where sleep her honoured mother's ashes; so
At length may her poor body find the rest
Which living it has never known: thereto,
She prays me, from the fears she hath of those
To whose harsh hand I have abandoned her,
She may not secretly be done to death,
But in her servants' sight and others', who

May witness her obedience kept and faith
To the true church, and guard her memory safe
From slanders haply to be blown abroad
Concerning her by mouths of enemies: last,
She asks that her attendants, who so well
And faithfully through all her miseries past
Have served her, may go freely where they please,
And lose not those small legacies of hers
Which poverty can yet bequeath to them.
This she conjures me by the blood of Christ,
Our kinship, and my grandsire's memory,
Who was her father's grandsire and a king,
And by the name of queen she bears with her
Even to the death, that I will not refuse,
And that a word in mine own hand may thus
Assure her, who will then as she hath lived
Die mine affectionate sister and prisoner. See,
Howe'er she have sinned, what heart were mine, if this
Drew no tears from me: not the meanest soul
That lives most miserable but with such words
Must needs draw down men's pity.

DAVISON. Sure it is,
This queen hath skill of writing: and her hand
Hath manifold eloquence with various voice
To express discourse of sirens or of snakes,
A mermaid's or a monster uttering best
All music or all malice. Here is come
A letter writ long since of hers to you
From Sheffield Castle, which for shame or fear
She durst not or she would not thence despatch,
Sent secretly to me from Rotheringay,
Not from her hand, but with her own hand writ.

So foul of import and malignity
I durst not for your majesty's respect
With its fierce infamies afire from hell
Offend your gracious eyesight: but because
Your justice by your mercy's ignorant hand
Hath her fair eyes put out, and walks now blind
Even by the pit's edge deathward, pardon me
If what you never should have seen be shown
By hands that rather would take fire in hand
Than lay in yours this writing. *[Gives her a letter.]*

ELIZABETH.

By this light,

Whate'er be here, thou hadst done presumptuously,
And Walsingham thy principal, to keep
Aught from mine eyes that being to me designed
Might even with most offence enlighten them.
Here is her hand indeed; and she takes up *[Reading.]*
In gracious wise enough the charge imposed
By promise on her and desire of ours,
How loth soe'er she be, regretfully
To bring such things in question of discourse
Yet with no passion but sincerity,
As God shall witness her, declares to us
What our good lady of Shrewsbury said to her
Touching ourself in terms ensuing; whereto
Answering she chid this dame for such belief
And reprehended for licentious tongue
To speak so lewdly of us: which herself
Believes not, knowing the woman's natural heart
And evil will as then to usward. Here
She writes no more than I would well believe
Of her as of the countess. Ha!

DAVISON.

Your grace

Shall but defile and vex your eyes and heart
To read these villainies through.

ELIZABETH.

God's death, man! peace:

Thou wert not best incense me toward thine own,
Whose eyes have been before me in them. What!

Was she not mad to write this? *One that had*

Your promise—lay with you times numberless—

All license and all privateness that may

Be used of wife and husband! yea, of her

And more dead men than shame remembers. *God*

Shall stand her witness—with the devil of hell

For sponsor to her vows, whose spirit in her

Begot himself this issue. Ha, the duke!

—Nay, God shall give me patience—and his knave,

And Hatton—God have mercy! nay, but hate,

Hate and constraint and rage have wrecked her wits,

And continence of life cut off from lust,

—This common stale of Scotland, that has tried

The sins of three rank nations, and consumed

Their veins whose life she took not—Italy,

France that put half this poison in her blood,

And her own kingdom that being sick therewith

Vomited out on ours the venomous thing

Whose head we set not foot on—but may God

Make my fame fouler through the world than hers

And ranker in men's record if I spare

The she-wolf that I saved, the woman-beast,

Wolf-woman—how the Latin rings we know,

And what lewd lair first reared her, and whose hand

Writ broad across the Louvre and Holyrood

Lupanar—but no brothel ever bred

Or breathed so rank a soul's infection, spawned

Or spat such foulness in God's face and man's
Or festered in such falsehood as her breath
Strikes honour sick with, and the spirit of shame
Dead as her fang shall strike herself, and send
The serpent that corruption calls her soul
To vie strange venoms with the worm of hell
And make the face of darkness and the grave
Blush hotter with the fires wherein that soul
Sinks deeper than damnation.

DAVISON.

Let your grace

Think only that but now the thing is known
And self-discovered which too long your love
Too dangerously hath cherished; and forget
All but that end which yet remains for her,
That right by pity be not overcome.

ELIZABETH. God pity so my soul as I do right,
And show me no more grace alive or dead
Than I do justice here. Give me again
That warrant I put by, being foolish: yea,
Thy word spake sooth—my soul's eyes were put out—
I could not see for pity. Thou didst well—
I am bounden to thee heartily—to cure
My sight of this distemper, and my soul.
Here in God's sight I set mine hand, who thought
Never to take this thing upon it, nor
Do God so bitter service. Take this hence:
And let me see no word nor hear of her
Till the sun see not such a soul alive.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.
MARY STUART.

SCENE I.—*Mary's Chamber in Fotheringay Castle.*

MARY STUART *and* MARY BEATON.

MARY STUART (*sings*).

*O Lord my God,
I have trusted in thee;
O Jesu my dearest one,
Now set me free.
In prison's oppression,
In sorrow's obsession,
I weary for thee.
With sighing and crying
Bowed down as dying,
I adore thee, I implore thee, set me free!*

Free are the dead: yet fain I would have had
Once, before all captivity find end,
Some breath of freedom living. These that come,
I think, with no such message, must not find,
For all this lameness of my limbs, a heart
As maimed in me with sickness. Three years gone
When last I parted from the earl marshal's charge,
I did not think to see his face again

Turned on me as his prisoner. Now his wife
Will take no jealousy more to hear of it,
I trust, albeit we meet not as unfriends,
If it be mortal news he brings me. Go,
If I seem ready, as meseems I should,
And well arrayed to bear myself indeed
None otherwise than queenlike in their sight,
Bid them come in. *[Exit MARY BEATON.]*

I cannot tell at last
If it be fear or hope that should expect
Death: I have had enough of hope, and fear
Was none of my familiars while I lived
Such life as had more pleasant things to lose
Than death or life may now divide me from.
'Tis not so much to look upon the sun
With eyes that may not lead us where we will,
And halt behind the footless flight of hope
With feet that may not follow: nor were aught
So much, of all things life may think to have,
That one not cowardly born should find it worth
The purchase of so base a price as this,
To stand self-shamed as coward. I do not think
This is mine end that comes upon me: but
I had liefer far it were than, were it not,
That ever I should fear it.

Enter KENT, SHREWSBURY, BEALE, and Sheriff.

Sirs, good day:

With such good heart as prisoners have, I bid
You and your message welcome.

KENT.

Madam, this

The secretary of the council here hath charge
To read as their commission.

MARY STUART.

Let me hear

In as brief wise as may beseem the time
The purport of it.

BEALE.

Our commission here

Given by the council under the great seal
Pronounces on your head for present doom
Death, by this written sentence.

MARY STUART.

Aye, my lords?

May I believe this, and not hold myself
Mocked as a child with shadows? In God's name,
Speak you, my lord of Shrewsbury: let me know
If this be dream or waking.

KENT.

Verily,

No dream it is, nor dreamers we that pray,
Madam, you meetly would prepare yourself
To stand before God's judgment presently.

MARY STUART. I had rather so than ever stand again
Before the face of man's. Why speak not you,
To whom I speak, my lord earl marshal? Nay,
Look not so heavily: by my life, he stands
As one at point to weep. Why, good my lord,
To know that none may swear by Mary's life
And hope again to find belief of man
Upon so slight a warrant, should not bring
This trouble on your eyes; look up, and say
The word you have for her that never was
Less than your friend, and prisoner.

SHREWSBURY.

None save this,

Which willingly I would not speak, I may;
That presently your time is come to die.

MARY STUART. Why, then, I am well content to
leave a world

Wherein I am no more serviceable at all
To God or man, and have therein so long
Endured so much affliction. All my life
I have ever earnestly desired the love
And friendship of your queen; have warned her oft
Of coming dangers; and have cherished long
The wish that I but once might speak with her
In plain-souled confidence; being well assured,
Had we but once met, there an end had been
Of jealousies between us: but our foes,
With equal wrong toward either, treacherously
Have kept us still in sunder: by whose craft
And crooked policy hath my sister's crown
Fallen in great peril, and myself have been
Imprisoned, and inveterately maligned,
And here must now be murdered. But I know
That only for my faith's sake I must die,
And this to know for truth is recompense
As large as all my sufferings. For the crime
Wherewith I am charged, upon this holy book
I lay mine hand for witness of my plea,
I am wholly ignorant of it; and solemnly
Declare that never yet conspiracy
Devised against the queen my sister's life
Took instigation or assent from me.

KENT. You swear but on a popish Testament:
Such oaths are all as worthless as the book.

MARY STUART. I swear upon the book wherein I
trust:

Would you give rather credit to mine oath
Sworn on your scriptures that I trust not in?

KENT. Madam, I fain would have you heartily

Renounce your superstition; toward which end
With us the godly dean of Peterborough,
Good Richard Fletcher, well approved for faith
Of God and of the queen, is hither come
To proffer you his prayerful ministry.

MARY STUART. If you, my lords, or he will pray
for me,

I shall be thankful for your prayers; but may not
With theirs that hold another faith mix mine.
I pray you therefore that mine almoner may ,
Have leave to attend on me, that from his hands
I, having made confession, may receive
The sacrament.

KENT. We may not grant you this.

MARY STUART. I shall not see my chaplain ere I die?
But two months gone this grace was granted me
By word expressly from your queen, to have
Again his ministration: and at last
In the utter hour and bitter strait of death
Is this denied me?

KENT. Madam, for your soul
More meet it were to cast these mummeries out
And bear Christ only in your heart, than serve
With ceremonies of ritual hand and tongue
His mere idolatrous likeness.

MARY STUART. This were strange,
That I should bear him visible in my hand
Or keep with lips and knees his titular rites
And cast in heart no thought upon him. Nay,
Put me, I pray, to no more argument:
But if this least thing be not granted, yet
Grant me to know the season of my death.

SHREWSBURY. At eight by dawn to-morrow you must die.

MARY STUART. So shall I hardly see the sun again.
By dawn to-morrow? meanest men condemned
Give not their lives' breath up so suddenly:
Howbeit, I had rather yield you thanks, who make
Such brief end of the bitterness of death
For me who have borne such bitter length of life,
Than plead with protestation of appeal
For half a piteous hour's remission: nor
Henceforward shall I be denied of man
Aught, who may never now crave aught again
But whence is no denial. Yet shall this
Not easily be believed of men, nor find
In foreign ears acceptance, that a queen
Should be thrust out of life thus. Good my friend,
Bid my physician Gorion come to me:
I have to speak with him—sirs, with your leave.—
Of certain monies due to me in France.
What, shall I twice desire your leave, my lords,
To live these poor last hours of mine alive
At peace among my friends? I have much to do,
And little time wherein to do it is left.

SHREWSBURY (*to Kent apart*). I pray she may not
mean worse than I would
Against herself ere morning.

KENT. Let not then
This French knave's drugs come near her, nor himself:
We will take order for it.

SHREWSBURY. Nay, this were but
To exasperate more her thwarted heart, and make
Despair more desperate than itself. Pray God

She be not minded to compel us put
 Force at the last upon her of men's hands
 To hale her violently to death, and make
 Judgment look foul and fierce as murder's face
 With stain of strife and passion.

[*Exeunt all but MARY STUART and MARY BEATON.*

MARY STUART.

So, my friend,

The last of all our Maries are you left
 To-morrow. Strange has been my life, and now
 Strange looks my death upon me: yet, albeit
 Nor the hour nor manner of it be mine to choose,
 Ours is it yet, and all men's in the world,
 To make death welcome in what wise we will.
 Bid you my chaplain, though he see me not,
 Watch through the night and pray for me: perchance,
 When ere the sundawn they shall bring me forth,
 I may behold him, and upon my knees
 Receive his blessing. Let our supper be
 Served earlier in than wont was: whereunto
 I bid my true poor servants here, to take
 Farewell and drink at parting to them all
 The cup of my last kindness, in good hope
 They shall stand alway constant in their faith
 And dwell in peace together: thereupon
 What little store is left me will I share
 Among them, and between my girls divide
 My wardrobe and my jewels severally,
 Reserving but the black robe and the red
 That shall attire me for my death: and last
 With mine own hand shall be my will writ out
 And all memorials more : down therein
 That I would leave for legacies of love

To my next kinsmen and my household folk.
And to the king my brother yet of France
Must I write briefly, but a word to say
I am innocent of the charge whereon I die
Now for my right's sake claimed upon this crown,
And our true faith's sake, but am barred from sigh
Even of mine almoner here, though hard at hand;
And I would bid him take upon his charge
The keeping of my servants, as I think
He shall not for compassionate shame refuse
Albeit his life be softer than his heart;
And in religion for a queen's soul pray
That once was styled Most Christian, and is now
In the true faith about to die, deprived
Of all her past possessions. But this most
And first behoves it, that the king of Spain
By GORION's word of mouth receive my heart,
Who soon shall stand before him. Bid the leech
Come hither, and alone, to speak with me.

[*Exit* MARY BEATON.]

She is dumb as death: yet never in her life
Hath she been quick of tongue. For all the rest,
Poor souls, how well they love me, all as well
I think I know: and one of them or twain
At least may surely see me to my death
Ere twice the hours have changed again. Perchance
Love that can weep not would the gladlier die
For those it cannot weep on. Time wears thin:
They should not now play laggard: nay, he comes,
The last that ever speaks alone with me
Before my soul shall speak alone with God.

Enter GORION.

I have sent once more for you to no such end
 As sick men for physicians: no strong drug
 May put the death next morning twelve hours back
 Whose twilight overshadows me, that am
 Nor sick nor medicinable. Let me know
 If I may lay the last of all my trust
 On you that ever shall be laid on man
 To prove him kind and loyal.

GORION.

So may God

Deal with me, madam, as I prove to you
 Faithful, though none but I were in the world
 That you might trust beside.

MARY STUART.

With equal heart

Do I believe and thank you. I would send
 To Paris for the ambassador from Spain
 This letter with two diamonds, which your craft
 For me must cover from men's thievish eyes
 Where they may be not looked for.

GORION.

Easily

Within some molten drug may these be hid,
 And faithfully by me conveyed to him.

MARY STUART. The lesser of them shall he keep in
 sign

Of my good friendship toward himself: but this
 In token to King Philip shall he give
 That for the truth I die, and dying commend
 To him my friends and servants, Gilbert Curle,
 His sister, and Jane Kennedy, who shall
 To-night watch by me; and my ladies all
 That have endured my prison: let him not
 Forget from his good favor one of these
 That I remember to him: Charles Arundel,

And either banished Paget; one whose heart
Was better toward my service than his hand,
Morgan: and of mine exiles for their faith,
The prelates first of Glasgow and of Ross;
And Liggons and Throgmorton, that have lost
For me their leave to live on English earth;
And Westmoreland, that lives now more forlorn
Than died that earl who rose for me with him.
These I beseech him favour for my sake
Still: and forget not, if he come again
To rule as king in England, one of them
That were mine enemies here: the treasurer first,
And Leicester, Walsingham, and Huntingdon,
At Tutbury once my foe, fifteen years gone,
And Wade that spied upon me three years since,
And Paulet here my gaoler: set them down
For him to wreak wrath's utmost justice on,
In my revenge remembered. Though I be
Dead, let him not forsake his hope to reign
Upon this people: with my last breath left
I make this last prayer to him, that not the less
He will maintain the invasion yet designed
Of us before on England: let him think,
It is God's quarrel, and on earth a cause
Well worthy of his greatness: which being won,
Let him forget no man of these nor me.
And now will I lie down, that four hours' sleep
May give me strength before I sleep again
And need take never thought for waking more.

SCENE II.—*The Presence Chamber.*

SHREWSBURY, KENT, PAULET, DRURY, MELVILLE,
and Attendants.

KENT. The stroke is past of eight.

SHREWSBURY. Not far, my lord.

KENT. What stays the provost and the sheriff
yet

That went ere this to bring the prisoner forth?
What, are her doors locked inwards? then perchance
Our last night's auguries of some close design
By death contrived of her self-slaughterous hand
To baffle death by justice hit but right
The heart of her bad purpose.

SHREWSBURY. Fear it not:

See where she comes, a queenlier thing to see
Than whom such thoughts take hold on.

*Enter MARY STUART, led by two gentlemen and preceded
by the Sheriff; MARY BEATON, BARBARA MOWERAY,
and other ladies behind, who remain in the doorway.*

MELVILLE (*kneeling to MARY*). Woe am I,

Madam, that I must bear to Scotland back
Such tidings watered with such tears as these.

MARY STUART. Ween not, good Melville: rather
should your heart

Rejoice that here an end is come at last
Of Mary Stuart's long sorrows; for be sure
That all this world is only vanity.
And this record I pray y^e make of me,
That a true woman to my faith I die,

And true to Scotland and to France: but God
Forgive them that have long desired mine end
And with false tongues have thirsted for my blood
As the hart thirsteth for the water-brooks.
O God, who art truth, and the author of all truth,
Thou knowest the extreme recesses of my heart,
And how that I was willing all my days
That England should with Scotland be fast friends.
Commend me to my son: tell him that I
Have nothing done to prejudice his rights
As king: and now, good Melville, fare thee well.
My lord of Kent, whence comes it that your charge
Hath bidden back my women there at door
Who fain to the end would bear me company?

KENT. Madam, this were not seemly nor discreet,
That these should so have leave to vex men's ears
With cries and loose lamentings: haply too
They might in superstition seek to dip
Their handkerchiefs for relics in your blood.

MARY STUART. That will I pledge my word they
shall not. Nay,
The queen would surely not deny me this,
The poor last thing that I shall ask on earth.
Even a far meaner person dying I think
She would not have so handled. Sir, you know
I am her cousin, of her grandsire's blood,
A queen of France by marriage, and by birth
Anointed queen of Scotland. My poor girls
Desire no more than but to see me die.

SHREWSBURY. Madam, you have leave to elect of
this your train
Two ladies with four men to go with you.

MARY STUART. I choose from forth my Scottish
following here

Jane Kennedy, with Elspeth Curle: of men,
Bourgoin and Gorion shall attend on me,
Gervais and Didier. Come then, let us go.

[*Exeunt: manent* MARY BEATON and BARBARA
MOWBRAY.

BARBARA. I wist I was not worthy, though my child
It is that her own hands made Christian: but
I deemed she should have bid you go with her.
Alas, and would not all we die with her?

MARY BEATON. Why, from the gallery here at hand
your eyes

May go with her along the hall beneath
Even to the scaffold: and I fain would hear
What fain I would not look on. Pray you, then,
If you may bear to see it as those below,
Do me that sad good service of your eyes
For mine to look upon it, and declare
All that till all be done I will not see;
I pray you of your pity.

BARBARA. Though mine heart
Break, it shall not for fear forsake the sight
That may be faithful yet in following her,
Nor yet for grief refuse your prayer, being fain
To give your love such bitter comfort, who
So long have never left her.

MARY BEATON. Till she die—
I have ever known I shall not till she die.
See you yet aught? if I hear spoken words,
My heart can better bear these pulses, else
Unbearable, that rend it.

BARBARA.

Yea, I see

Stand in mid hall the scaffold, black as death,
And black the block upon it: all around,
Against the throng a guard of halberdiers;
And the axe against the scaffold-rail reclined,
And two men masked on either hand beyond:
And hard behind the block a cushion set,
Black, as the chair behind it.

MARY BEATON.

When I saw

Fallen on a scaffold once a young man's head,
Such things as these I saw not. Nay, but on:
I knew not that I spake: and toward your ears
Indeed I spake not.

BARBARA.

All those faces change;

She comes more royally than ever yet
Fell foot of man triumphant on this earth,
Imperial more than empire made her, born
Enthroned as queen sat never. Not a line
Stirs of her sovereign feature: like a bride
Brought home she mounts the scaffold; and her eyes
Sweep regal round the cirque beneath, and rest,
Subsiding with a smile. She sits, and they,
The doomsmen earls, beside her; at her left
The sheriff, and the clerk at hand on high,
To read the warrant.

MARY BEATON.

None stands there but knows

What things therein are writ against her: God
Knows what therein is writ not. God forgive
All.

BARBARA. Not a face there breathes of all the throng
But is more moved than hers to hear this read,
Whose look alone is changed not.

MARY BEATON.

Once I knew

A face that changed not in as dire an hour
More than the queen's face changes. Hath he not
Ended?

BARBARA. You cannot hear them speak below:
Come near and hearken; bid not me repeat
All.

MARY BEATON. I beseech you—for I may not come.

BARBARA. Now speaks Lord Shrewsbury but a word
or twain,

And brieflier yet she answers, and stands up
As though to kneel, and pray.

MARY BEATON.

I too have prayed—

God hear at last her prayers not less than mine,
Which failed not, sure, of hearing.

BARBARA.

Now draws nigh

That heretic priest, and bows himself, and thrice
Strives, as a man that sleeps in pain, to speak,
Stammering: she waves him by, as one whose prayers
She knows may nought avail her: now she kneels,
And the earls rebuke her, and she answers not,
Kneeling. O Christ, whose likeness there engraved
She strikes against her bosom, hear her! Now
That priest lifts up his voice against her prayer,
Praying: and a voice all round goes up with his:
But hers is lift up higher t' it climbs their cry,
In the great psalms of penitence: and now
She prays aloud in English; for the Pope
Our father, and his church; and for her son,
And for the queen her murderess; and that God
May turn from England yet his wrath away;
And so forgives her enemies; and implores

High intercession of the saints with Christ,
Whom crucified she kisses on his cross,
And crossing now her breast—Ah, heard you not?
*Even as thine arms were spread upon the cross,
So make thy grace, O Jesus, wide for me,
Receive me to thy mercy so, and so
Forgive my sins.*

MARY BEATON. So be it, if so God please.
Is she not risen up yet?

BARBARA. Yea, but mine eyes
Darken: because those deadly twain close masked
Draw nigh as men that crave forgiveness, which
Gently she grants: *for now*, she said, *I hope
You shall end all my troubles.* Now meseems
They would put hand upon her as to help,
And disarray her raiment: but she smiles—
Heard you not that? can you nor hear nor speak,
Poor heart, for pain? *Truly*, she said, *my lords,
I never had such chamber-grooms before
As these to wait on me.*

MARY BEATON. An end, an end.

BARBARA. Now come those twain upon the scaffold up
Whom she preferred before us: and she lays
Her crucifix down, which now the headsman takes
Into his cursed hand, but being rebuked
Puts back for shame that sacred spoil of hers.
And now they lift her veil up from her head
Softly, and softly draw the black robe off,
And all in red as of a funeral flame
She stands up statelier yet before them, tall
And clothed as if with sunset: and she takes
From Elspeth's hand the crimson sleeves, and draws

Their covering on her arms: and now those twain
Burst out aloud in weeping: and she speaks—
Weep not; I promised for you. Now she kneels;
And Jane binds round a kerchief on her eyes:
And smiling last her heavenliest smile on earth,
She waves a blind hand toward them, with *Farewell,*
Farewell, to meet again: and they come down
And leave her praying aloud, *In thee, O Lord,*
I put my trust: and now, that psalm being through,
She lays between the block and her soft neck
Her long white peerless hands up tenderly,
Which now the headsman draws again away,
But softly too: now stir her lips again—
Into thine hands, O Lord, into thine hands,
Lord, I commend my spirit: and now—but now,
Look you, not I, the last upon her.

MARY BEATON.

Ha!

He strikes awry: she stirs not. Nay, but now
He strikes aright, and ends it.

BARBARA.

Hark, a cry.

VOICE BELOW. So perish all found enemies of the
queen!

ANOTHER VOICE. Amen.

MARY BEATON. I heard that very cry go up
Far off long since to God, who answers here.

THE END.

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